

TIP TOP WEEKLY

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

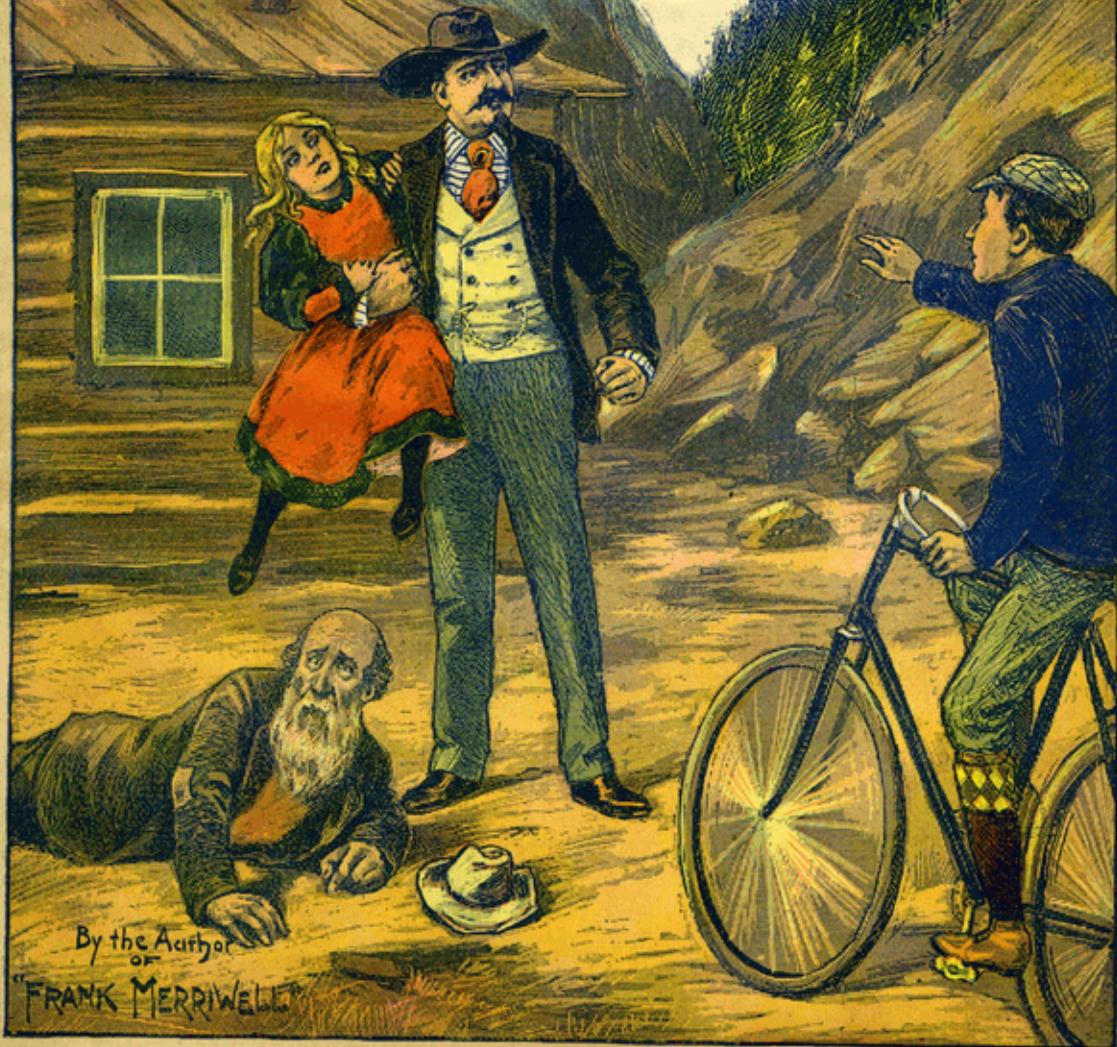
June 12, 1897.

Vol. 1. No. 61.

Price Five Cents.

FRANK MERRIWELL IN THE MINES OR

THE BLIND SINGER OF SILVER BLUFF



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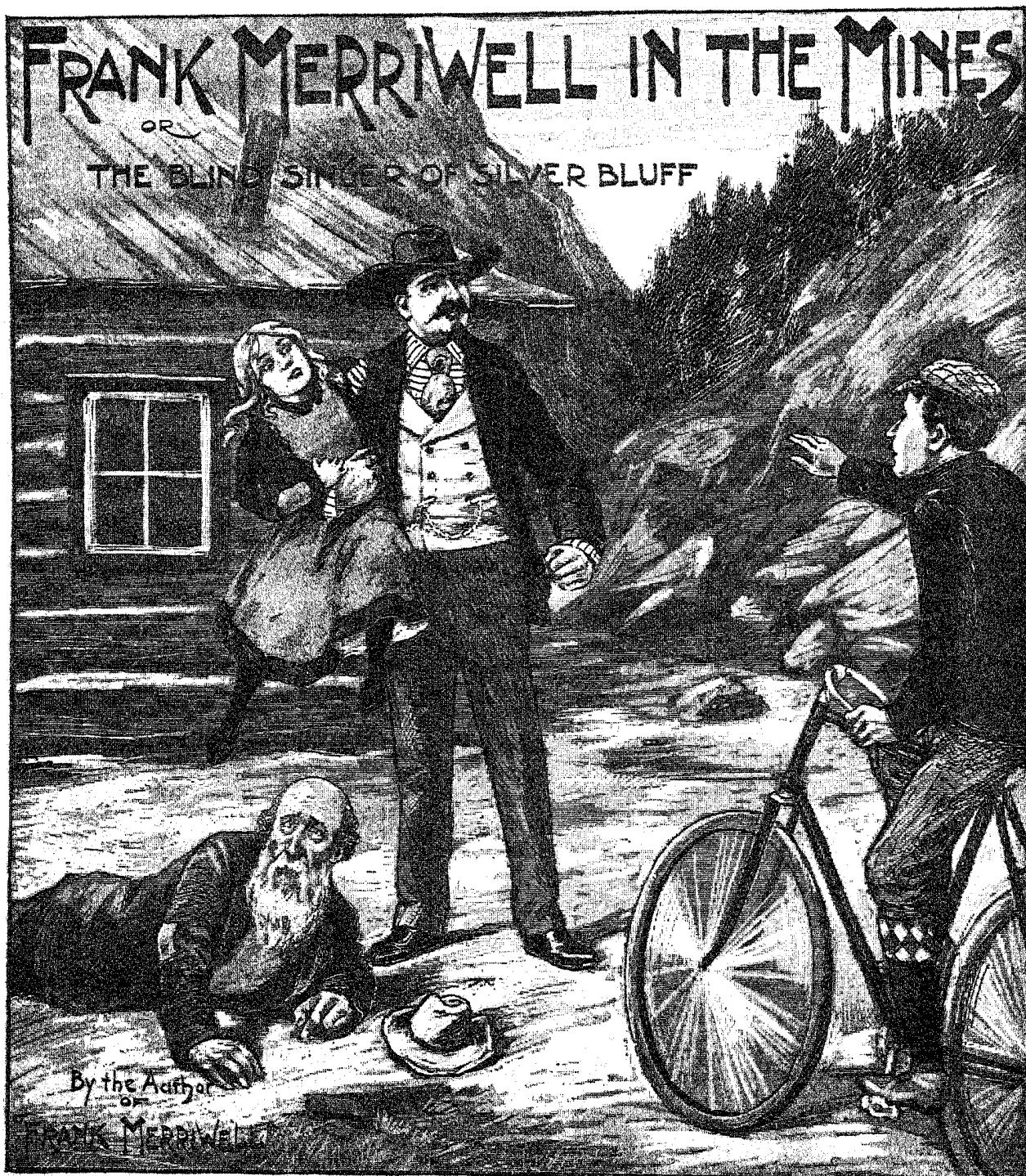
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FRANK MERRIWELL IN THE MINES; OR, **The Blind Singer of Silver Bluff.**

By the Author of "FRANK MERRIWELL."

PROLOGUE.

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW.

It was a wild winter night in the mountains. Amid the dreary peaks the wind was howling like ten thousand famished wolves. In the black depths of the great canyons and ravines it sometimes roared with a sound of distant thunder, while anon it shrieked and wailed and sobbed with such heart-rending agony and pathos that it seemed all the lost souls of Purgatory had been set free in those ice-bound mountains.

In its teeth the Storm Demon carried a mass of snow, which it spat forth in frightful fury. The snow was fine, like sand, and like sand it was hard, so that whenever it struck human flesh it stabbed and stung like a million tiny daggers. This snow drove through the scraggy pines on the mountain sides, where the wind rose and fell in a wailing roar, it piled into the canyons, smothering great boulders, and it heaped itself about the

little cabin that stood against the face of the bluff.

Within the little cabin an old, white-bearded man hovered over a roaring fire, which he replenished now and then from a pile of wood that was heaped against the wall. Under the door, over the door, around the rattling window, and through chinks in the wall snow was driven into the cabin, sometimes being carried half way across the room.

For all of the roaring fire, the old man found no small difficulty to keep warm. His thin form was bent with age, his hands had been drawn out of shape by rheumatism, and his face bore traces of years of struggles, toils, hardships, disappointments and bitter sorrows.

Night had come down suddenly and brought with it the storm, which the old man had expected, and for which he had prepared the pile of wood.

"It is a terrible night and a terrible storm," muttered the old man, as he put more wood on the fire. "She will not come to-night."

He went to the window, and tired of peer out, but he could see nothing save a thick white sheet of snow.

"God have mercy on any poor wretch who was caught out in this storm!" came fervently from his lips. And then, as if seized by a great fear, he groaned:

"What if she is out there!"

The wind shook the cabin, seeming to howl in derision at the old man within, while the snow flung itself against the window like fine hail. Sometimes the voices of the storm were like despairing human cries, and as he listened the sluggish blood in the heart of the old man grew cold.

"The snow is so thick—so thick!" he huskily whispered. "The light will not shine through it. And yet every night since she went away I have put the light in the window. What if I should fail tonight, and what if I should find her dead outside in the morning!"

With feverish haste he sought for a large oil lamp, which he took down from a shelf. His crooked fingers trembled as he removed the chimney, which slipped and fell to the table, but to his unspeakable joy was not broken. He found matches, and lighted one of them, but even as he was about to apply the flame to the wick a puff of wind came through a chink and blew it out.

"It is trying to delay me—trying to delay me that she may perish before I can put the light in the window!" panted the old man, as he snatched up another match. "Hear the wind mock me—hear it laugh and howl!"

This time he succeeded in lighting the lamp, and he quickly carried it to the window, where he placed it on a shelf that plainly had been constructed to support it. He pressed his face to the window, and tried to look out once more, but the light showed him nothing save a great sheet of white.

"She will never see it!" he cried de-

spairingly; "if she is out there she'll never see it!"

And again the wind mocked him and tore at the little cabin as if curious to reach him.

The old man went back and sat by the fire, upon which he piled more wood.

"The light is in the window," he said. "I have done all I can. Poor Nellie—poor girl! He had so much money, and she loved pretty things so well. I tried to tell her that some day I must strike it—that some day my mine would make me rich, and then I would buy her all the fine things her heart could desire. She had no faith in the mine. And Victor, my boy, where is he? I wrote him, and told him all, and he swore he would find Powers and take her from him. I have not heard from Victor since then, and I do not——"

The old man stopped and started up. Was it the wind that made that strangely human cry? Was it the wind that had banged at his door with a shock? Was it the wind that slipped down, down the door, like a sliding body?

Shaking in every limb the old man got up quickly, and hastened to the door, which he did not hesitate to fling open, for all of the terrible storm. Snow beat in upon him, and the wind sucked away his breath, but he bent forward and placed his hands on something that lay there at the threshold of his cabin. With a sudden burst of strength he dragged that something into the cabin, and then hurled shut the door in the very teeth of the tempest.

A woman, covered by snow, her hair unbound and matted with snow, her face blue and pinched, her eyes closed, lay there on the cabin floor, clasping in her arms a bundle that was closely wrapped about by a shawl.

Beside her knelt the old man, whose clasped hands were uplifted, and from whose lips came the wild prayer:

"Merciful God, I thank thee! Spare her life—give her back to me!"

Then he dragged her nearer the fire, he rubbed her face and her hands, he forced a little whisky into her mouth, he worked with frantic haste and heart-breaking fear.

She opened her eyes—she saw him. Then the ghost of a smile came to her face, and that smile told she was yet young, scarcely more than a girl, and she had been very pretty not long ago.

"Daddy—my dear good daddy!"

The words were the faintest whisper, uttered with a supreme effort, but he heard them, and he sobbed with joy.

"Nellie, my dear one! my little girl! my pet! you have come back to your poor, lonely old daddy, thank God!"

His arms were about her, and he kissed her as a father kisses the one child he loves best in all the world—the child that is dearer to him than his own life.

"Yes, I have come back," she whispered; "but not for long, dear daddy. I must soon go away again."

"You shall never leave me again!" he declared.

"You do not know—you do not understand. But—my baby—where is my baby! Quick, daddy—look at her! See if she is alive!"

She tried to start up, but her strength was not equal to the task, and she fell back, moaning. The old man hastily and carefully undid the bundle. He removed the shawl, he removed other wraps, and at last he came to something that was alive, warm and moving. This was a baby girl, at least five months old.

When the mother saw the child was alive, when she heard it cry, she whispered a thankful prayer.

"Put it on the bed, daddy, and lift me, help me there."

He did so, and with some difficulty aided the mother to get upon the rude bed, which was near the fire.

"There," she said, indistinctly, "I shall remain here till I go away for good. I am going to leave Little Blossom with you, daddy," she added more plainly, "and you must keep her, and care for her, and love her as you love me. Be good to her, daddy, for she is blind."

"But you shall not leave me!" the old man cried. "I will keep you both! If he comes— Well, he shall not take you from me again."

Once more she smiled faintly.

"You are so good, daddy!" she said. "You always were so good to me! And I have been such a bad girl—I have caused you much pain, dear daddy—"

"Don't, Nellie—don't speak of that!"

"It is true. But he was so handsome, daddy, and he had so much money! He promised me such beautiful things, and I thought it would be grand. He said he would marry me, and he did. Here is the certificate, daddy," she fluttered, drawing a paper from the bosom of her dress. "Keep it—keep it for Little Blossom's sake. And keep her with you always; do not let him have her. Promise me you will not let him have her!"

"I promise, Nellie. But you must not excite yourself so much by talking—there is no need of it."

"I must talk now or never. You do not seem to understand, daddy. I am going to die—I feel that I am dying now."

"No! no!" he hoarsely cried, clutching her with his crooked fingers. "You shall not die—you must not!"

The wind in the ravine answered his wild cry with a triumphant yell, as if the storm rejoiced in its work.

"I am going, now, daddy!" whispered the dying woman. "I was determined to reach you and give you Little Blossom, else I should have perished long ago. I was near when the storm caught me. Then I feared all was over, but at last,

through the blinding snow, I saw the glimmer of the light in the window. It was like a ray from Heaven!"

The old man was choked by his emotions. He prayed and he clung to the child he loved. And she—for a little while she seemed to forget him. She drew the baby toward her, folded it in her arms, and sung a low, indistinct lullaby song to it, so that after a time it fell asleep.

"Daddy!"

"Yes, Nellie."

"Where are you? It is—it is getting dark. Is the light still in the window, daddy?"

"Yes, yes, my dear one—it is there."

"Daddy, do you know, I thought I would not tell you, but I must—I must! Victor—my brother—he came for me."

"He did? He said he would, and he swore he would take you from that wretch."

"Poor Victor!"

"Poor Victor!" gasped the old man, clutching her hand. "What do you mean?"

"Be brave, daddy—dear daddy! Victor came for me, and—and they quarreled. I saw it—oh, Heaven! I saw it all. He—he shot my brother!"

The old man gasped for breath, and a long, low moan came quivering from his lips.

"Poor daddy!" whispered the dying woman, as she touched his bowed head with her cold, thin hand. "I thought I wouldn't tell you, but I knew—I knew you must—find it out soon. That was what filled me with horror—oh, such horror!—for the murderer. Then—then I took my child—and fled. Then I hurried back to—to you, dear daddy."

Silence again within the cabin. Outside the storm seemed hushed near at hand, but afar off on the bleak mountains it moaned and moaned.

"Kiss me, daddy—kiss me good-by! I

can't see you, but I feel your lips—for the last time. Remember your promise to keep Little Blossom, my blind darling. Be good to her, daddy—as you have been good to me."

Of a sudden a smile overspread her face, and she seemed to be looking eagerly and intently at something:

"Why!" she exclaimed, and her voice was like the far-off falling of water—"why, how light it is now! Such a beautiful, beautiful light! I know—I know! It is—it is the light in the window!"

The peaceful smile became set upon her face, and the far-off look was fixed in her eyes. And now the storm was sobbing like a host of mourning spirits. The old gray-headed man knelt beside the bed, on which lay a living child and its dead mother.

But the sweet smile on the face of the dead told that she had in truth seen a light in the window of Heaven.

CHAPTER I.

BEN BOZE AND THE BICYCLE BOYS.

"My glacious!" shouted Sing Lee from the front steps of the Golden Eagle Saloon, which was situated in the lively little mining camp of Silver Bluff—"my glacious! Lookee out—lookee out, evlybody!"

"Hyar, you pigtailed heathen!" roared a harsh voice from within the saloon, "whatever is the matter with yer? What be yer dancin' like a monkey an' squawkin' like a coyote fer?"

"Clome out klick!" shrilly piped the Chinaman, making frantic gestures—"clome out an' slee Melican boyee lidin' on two wheelee, no holdee up allee samee stlay so, no hossee to pullee allee samee Melican bloyee make um go with feetee! Hoop-la! Chika-chi hollygo lally!"

"Whatever is ther onery almon'-eyed son-of-er-gun tryin' ter git through him?" growled the harsh voice within.

Then a broad-shouldered, rough-looking man, at least six feet tall and solid as an ox, wearing a red shirt and carrying a heavy rawhide whip in his hand, came stalking out of the saloon.

One look this man took in the direction indicated by the dancing Chinaman, and then he turned to roar into the saloon:

"Come out hyar, ther hull shootin' match o' yer! Hyar is a sight fer sore eyes! Move lively, critters."

There was a rush of heavy feet within the saloon, and nearly a dozen men, the most of them rough and tough in appearance, came pouring out by the door, for they all knew it meant something unusual when Ben Boze spoke in that manner.

Exclamations of unspeakable amazement broke from their lips when they looked up the one street of the town and saw five lads, dressed in uniform suits and mounted on handsome bicycles, approached swiftly.

"Wa-al, dern these yar two eyes o' mine!" rasped Crooked Pete, a hunchback and one of the "bad men" of the town. "Whenever did I ever see anything like that afore? Waugh!"

"Tenderfeet!" cried another.

"An' bisuckles!" shouted yet another.

"How durst they enter the precincts of this city without first consulting me and obtaining permits to do so?" cried a short, thick man, who had an abnormally large stomach, a very red face and a husky voice. "They are laying themselves liable and amenable to the law. Whar is the city marshal?"

The five boys were Frank Merriwell and his friends, and they came on toward the Golden Eagle, apparently quite undisturbed by the excitement their appearance had created.

"That looks like a hotel," said Harry Rattleton, "and the crowd in front of it is a fair sample of the 'guests' to be

found in the average mining-camp hotel."

"They seem to be somewhat disturbed by our presence," murmured Bruce Browning. "We are getting to be great curiosities out in this country."

"Nebber seen no such ignerent pussons in all mah life!" came disdainfully from Toots. "Seems lek dey nebber saw no college gemman on bisuckles out heah."

"Are you going to stop here, Frank?" asked Jack Diamond.

"Yes," nodded Merriwell. "It is a long distance to the next town, and the road is a bad one, so we will try to find accommodations here for the night."

"Mah soul an' body!" gurgled Toots: "I don' lek de looks ob dem pussons, Marser Frank. Dey has got a mighty ba-a-ad way ob standin' wif their han's on their hips clost teh dem big revolvers."

"They are not half as bad as they look, Toots," declared Merriwell. "They seem to take that rough and dangerous appearance from their surroundings—the mountains, the gulches and the ragged rocks. I haven't a doubt but some of them are as mild and harmless as doves."

"Mebbe dat am so, Marser Frank, but I don't lek dat kind ob doves—no, sar!"

As they approached the Golden Eagle Sing Lee grew more and more excited. He waved his hands over his head, dancing and chattering like a monkey.

Of a sudden, when the boys were near at hand, the Celestial uttered a wild yell and started to run across the street in front of the riders. He got a little more than half way across, and then seemed to change his mind, for he wheeled round to run back.

Instead of running back to the saloon, however, Sing Lee ran straight into Toots, and bicycle, colored boy and Chinaman came down in a heap in the middle of the street.

"My glacious!" wailed Sing Lee.

"Land ob wartermillions!" gasped Toots.

Then they sat up and looked at each other, and the expressions on their faces would have made a horse laugh.

"Chika-chi hollygo lally!" chattered the Chinaman, trying to get one of his feet out of the spokes of the rear wheel of the bicycle.

"Hold on, dar!" cried Toots, angrily. "Don't yo' go fo' teh call me names, yo pigtail washee-washee! I wants yo' teh 'stinctly understan' I's a 'spectable cullud pussun, sar!"

"Black bloy gitee in way," declared the heathen.

"Git out, you' monkey face! Yo' run roun' lek a chicken wif his haid cut off. If yo's broke mah bisuckle I'll make yo' pay fo' it, sar, or I'll cut dat pig-tail off close up teh yo' cocumnut—'deed I will! I's a ba-a-ad coon when I'm ma-a-ad!"

"Black bloy gitee in way," insisted Sing Lee. "No gittee out, gitee lun oval. Muckahi!"

"Yo' wants ter hold on right whar you' is, Chinee!" shouted Toots. "Yo' can't call dis nigger no muckahi! If yo' does, yo' am in dangah ob bein' cayarved all up wif a razzer!"

"Yah!" retorted the Celestial, as he gave a wild kick in his struggles to free his foot. "Washee facee, black bloy!"

"Yah, yo'se'f!" flung back Toots, and then he uttered a howl of pain as one of Sing Lee's feet struck him on the shins.

A moment later the colored boy grabbed for the Chinaman's queue, missed it, and clutched Sing Lee's shoulder.

At the same time Sing Lee knocked off the darky's cap and fastened both hands in Toots' wool.

Then there was trouble, for the two became so mixed with the bicycle that it seemed doubtful if either would ever be able to extricate himself from the wreck.

The men in front of the Golden Eagle roared with laughter.

"Go it, nigger!" cried a voice.

"Give it to him, Chinee!" shouted another.

"Fight ye tarriers, fight!" bellowed a third.

In a wild burst of delight one of the men snatched out a pair of revolvers and began shooting in the air.

The other boys had dismounted, and they were enjoying the spectacle till the negro and the Chinaman began to fight in earnest. Then Frank called to Jack:

"Here, take my wheel! I've got to separate them, or there'll not be anything left of Toots' machine."

He ran over to the combatants and caught hold of them.

"Hyar!" roared the big man with the whip, "leggo thar! Let 'em fight it out, dad burn yer!"

Frank paid no attention to this, but proceeded to separate the combatants, much to the disgust of the spectators in front of the saloon.

Ben Boze came down into the street, flourishing his whip.

"Didn't I tell yer ter let 'em alone?" he shouted, glaring at Frank.

"Ah, did you speak to me, sir?" asked Merriwell, coolly. "I didn't notice you were addressing me."

"Didn't, hay? Wa-al, yer wants ter notice when I chirps, tenderfoot, fer I'm a bad man from away up ther crick."

"You look it," nodded Frank with mild sarcasm, which the big bullwhacker failed to observe.

"I be it," rumbled the man. "I'm wuss'n a whole tribe o' Paches when I gits ter riotin' on ther rampage, an' all onery ordinary critters wants ter give me room. Didn't notice I wuz speakin' ter yer, hay? Dern my boots! If you knowed a little more about Ben Boze o' Bitter Crick yer'd noticed it derned suddin'. When I speaks round yere, common galoots git down an' crawls. When I chirps, people generally hunts their holes.

Arter gittin' inter their holes ther most o' 'em pull ther holes in arter them. That's ther kind o' roarin' blizzard I be."

"Really, you must be a terrible man."

"Terrible! Waugh! I'm p'izen! I'm more dangerous than a nest o' rattlers. Whoop!"

"Blad Melican milan," chattered Sing Lee, who seemed much afraid of Boze. "Eatee lat-tail files. Lookeee out flo him!"

"Land ob goodness!" gasped Toots, getting behind Frank and peering round at Boze, with his eyes bulging from his head. "I nebber seen nobody befo' dat could eat rat-tail files, no, sir!"

The big ruffian was in his element, for he believed all the boys stood in the most abject fear of him.

"Ev'ry mornin' when I kin git 'em, I have a nigger fer breakfast," he declared, snapping his big whip.

"Dat settles it!" gurgled the colored boy. "I'd done po'erful sight better if I'd let dat landslide burry me, an' had de whole fing done wif."

"Perhaps," said Frank, mildly—"perhaps we may be able to induce you to spare us the only nigger we have. If we had two or three in our party we wouldn't mind letting you have one for breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Mebbe I'll spare him, an' mebbe I won't. That's 'cordin' ter how I feels. If yer rubs me ther right way o' ther fur I ain't so bad; but if yer rubs me ther wrong way I'm a grizzly. However did yer durst come ridin' inter this yere town on them things, anyhow?"

"That's exactly what I'd like to know," wheezed the stout man with the greasy clothes and red face, as he came forward pompously. "How did you dare enter ther precincts of this town without special permit from the proper legal authorities. I represent the majesty of the law here, an' I can supply you with

licenses fer ridin' them things through yere at the rate of five dollars a license. I am Samuel Spudd, chief justice of the court of—"

"Git out!" roared Ben Boze, with such violence that Judge Spudd nearly fell over backward in alarm. "Whoever told yer ter mix in hyar till I wuz done with these yere tenderfeet? Go chase yerself afore I robs ther majesty o' ther law o' her chief representative in Silver Bluff. Git!"

"Ah, yes! Excuse me—excuse me! I thought—"

Crack!

Judge Spudd made a wild leap to get away, and uttered a shout of pain as he felt the snapper of the big whip cut a piece of cloth from the seat of his trousers.

"Yer ain't got no right ter think when I'm round—none whatever," declared the bullwhacker. "Ef ye're lookin' fer razzle juice, wait till I gits through with these yere tenderfeet, an' then you kind have what's left o' them."

"An' that'll be derned little," said Crooked Pete, with a grin.

"It looks as if we are in for trouble here, Frank," said Jack Diamond, speaking guardedly in Merriwell's ear.

"Perhaps not," said Frank, quietly. "We'll keep out of trouble if we can."

"That's right," yawned Bruce Browning. "I am not feeling very well, and I do not care to exert myself."

The attention of Ben Boze was drawn to the bicycles, which he proceeded to examine. After a moment he said:

"I reckon I kin ride one o' these yer things, an' I'm goin' ter try it. I'll show yer how ter do it."

He advanced to secure one of the wheels.

"Do let him don't it—I mean don't let him do it!" whispered Rattleton, excitedly. "He will smash any bicycle he tries to ride, and we can't get another very easy in these parts."

The bullwhacker picked up Toots' bicycle and fear of what would happen to the wheel unloosed the colored boy's tongue.

"G'way, dar, man!" squawked the darky, in fear. "If yo' tries teh ride dat, yo's suah gwan teh smash hit! Don' yo' try teh git on dat bisuckle!"

He started toward Boze, who turned in surprise. A roar of anger broke from the big ruffian, and then his whip cut through the air.

Toots tried to get out of the way, but the lash caught him, and he gave a yell of pain.

The bullwhacker swung back the whip to strike again, but it was snatched from his grasp by Frank Merriwell, whose eyes were flashing, and who cried:

"You cowardly ruffian! Try a taste of your own medicine!"

Then with all the strength he could command Frank sent the lash snapping and curling round the bullwhacker's body.

CHAPTER II.

NERVY TENDERFEET.

"Wow! Wa-a-a-ow! Murder! Oo-oo-oooh!"

The astounded bullwhacker leaped into the air, uttering the wildest howls of pain. He could scarcely believe it possible that a human being had dared strike him with his own whip.

"Holy cats!" cried Crooked Pete, aghast. "Now look out fer bullets! Thar'll be some tenderfeet fitted fer plantin' directly!"

Scarcely were the words uttered when Ben Boze snatched out a huge revolver, a murderous look on his bewhiskered face.

But before the man could use the weapon his own whip in the hands of Frank Merriwell cut the air again. The lash of the whip curled round the barrel of the revolver, and the weapon was snatched from the big ruffian's hand.

This trick was performed as neatly and gracefully as possible. The lash snatched the revolver from the ruffian's fingers, snapped it into the air and sent it spinning toward Merriwell, who deftly caught the weapon.

Then just as Boze was reaching for another "gun," the big man found himself "covered" by the revolver he had drawn a moment before, that revolver being in the hand of the boy who had wielded the whip.

"Go slow, you big ruffian!" rang out Frank's voice. "If you try to pull another gun I'll bore you sure! I don't want to shoot even as miserable a creature as you, but you'll force me to do it in self-defense if you try to draw."

Boze suddenly became motionless as if turned to stone, for he saw the boy had "the drop," and there was something in Merriwell's manner that convinced the ruffian it would not be "healthy" to try to get out another revolver.

Crooked Pete nearly fainted from sheer amazement.

"Whatever is this yere I beholds?" he gasped, rubbing his eyes. "Is this a dream—ur what?"

"It's no dream," said a calm, even voice behind Pete. "That boy is able to take care of himself, if he is a tenderfoot."

The speaker was a striking-looking man, a stranger in Silver Bluff, having arrived there that very morning. He was tall and straight, well proportioned and supple in his movements. He had ridden into town on a snow-white horse, whose flowing mane and tail were scarcely whiter than the long hair of its rider. The mustache of the man was iron-gray, and his eyes were black as night, piercing and powerful. His face had a noticeable pallor, but it was not the pallor of weakness. His jaw was square, and there was sternness and resolution about his face and his manner.

Despite the fact that this man had worn Mexican clothes, trimmed with silver lace, and the mountings of his horse's outfit had been of silver, there was that in his manner which had prevented any of the tough citizens of the town from picking a quarrel with him. He wore no visible weapons, but all who saw him felt that he could produce a "gun" in the twinkling of an eye.

The business of the stranger was not apparent, but he stopped in Silver Bluff, and soon made it apparent that he had money to pay for anything he ordered. That he was familiar with the ways of the West and knew how to make himself solid by leaving enough "dust" at the Golden Eagle to pay for a round of drinks for every man in town.

At the one hotel of Silver Bluff the stranger registered simply as "Mr. Smith, Mexico," and the citizens immediately fell to speaking of him as "the man from Mexico."

Smith had scarcely spoken to anybody save the proprietor of the hotel and the barkeeper of the Golden Eagle since entering Silver Bluff, but now having seen Frank Merriwell disarm Ben Boze and get the drop on the ruffian with Boze's own weapon, the man from Mexico ventured to express a belief that the boy could take care of himself.

"Wa-al," growled the hunchback, "thar can't no tenderfoot use my pard Boze that way an' keep a whole skin."

Then with a murderous glance in his small eyes, Crooked Pete snapped out a revolver.

The deformed ruffian was not given a chance to use his gun.

"Go slow," calmly commanded the Man from Mexico, as his hand closed on the weapon. "Give the boy a square deal."

A snarl escaped the hunchback's lips, but when he looked up and saw the expression in Smith's eyes, he wilted directly.

"If you try to harm that boy in such a way you'll be committing suicide," declared the Man from Mexico. "It will not be a good thing for you to try it when I am not looking, either, for I shall hear about it."

"You must be stuck on ther kid," muttered Crooked Pete.

"I am stuck on anybody I desire to see given a fair show just as much as I am stuck on him. I have said enough, and I think you understand."

Then he let go of the weapon, and coolly turned his back on the hunchback.

Crooked Pete was seized with a burning desire to shove the weapon against Smith's coat and put a bullet clean through the man, but there was something in the careless manner of the white-haired stranger that made the little cutthroat afraid.

"He'd never turn his back that way ef he didn't hev some other galoot ter bore me ef I tried to drop him foul," thought Pete, and then he slowly put up his revolver.

By this time Frank Merriwell had compelled Ben Boze to elevate his hands and hold them above his head.

"Holee smokee!" chattered Sing Lee, grinning in a way that showed he appreciated the humor of the situation. "Melican bloy glood flo slomething sidee lidin' two wheelee. My glacious! Melican bloy vely smalt—vely smalt!"

"Yah! yah! yah!" laughed Toots. "When dey done fools wif dat chile dey meks de bigges' kind ob mistake—yes, sar!"

"Whatever be yer goin' ter do with me, tenderfoot?" growled Boze, uneasily. "Goin' ter keep me hyar with my han's in ther air all night?"

"Oh, no, my dear sir," smiled Frank. "I am going to give you a little advice, and then I want you to get out. In the first place, I want to warn you not to molest any of my friends while we remain in town."

"Huah!" grunted the bullwhacker.

"And I have to add that I'll make it very unpleasant for you if you trouble them. In the next place, let me tell you that it is not always wise to jump on a boy just because he is a boy. There are boys who are more dangerous to fool with than men."

"Yo' bet dat am right!" put in Toots.

"Still further, all tenderfeet are not going to get down and crawl when some loud-mouthed, blatant, self-styled bad man tells them to do so. There are tenderfeet, and, then again, there are other tenderfeet."

"Yes, sar," nodded the colored lad, "an' we am de odder tenderfeet, sar."

"That is all," concluded Frank. "But keep your hands up!—you are to turn to the right and march down the street without stopping till you are out of pistol range, unless you are anxious to find out how well I can shoot."

"An' dat boy can shoot a mighty sight better dan he can use a whip, man," declared Toots, warningly.

So, much against his will the "bad man" was forced to march away, but he vowed vengeance as he departed.

As Boze disappeared a little man with red whiskers and long-legged boots, came in sight and stood staring after the bullwhacker in evident astonishment.

Then the little man came hustling toward the group in front of the Golden Eagle, and the boys saw he wore a belt round his waist, and that belt was loaded with weapons of various kinds.

The newcomer excitedly asked some of the spectators what had happened and he was told how Frank had subdued Ben Boze.

Straightway the little man approached Merriwell, stopped with his feet set wide apart, thrust his broad-brimmed hat back on his head, and stared at the lad who had dared face the reputed "bad man."

"Well," he exclaimed, in a squeaky,

high-pitched voice, "I'd never thought it of him!"

Seeing the little man, Judge Spudd hurried up and grabbed him by the arm, wheezing forth:

"City Marshal Mole, it is your sworn duty to arrest these persons, who are dangerous to the peace of the community. They have dared to venture into this town without first providing themselves with special permits to ride their bicycles through Silver Bluff, which is an insult and a defiance of the law. I call on you to arrest them."

City Marshal Mole seemed surprised and ill at ease. From what he had heard these boys were not ordinary tenderfeet, and it might not be a pleasant task to arrest the one who had disarmed and cowed Ben Boze.

Mole coughed, and took a step toward Frank, but retreated two steps as Merriwell turned sharply with the bullwhacker's revolver still in his hand.

"Er-er-excuse me!" stammered the little city marshal. "I—I wish you would be careful with that gun, young man. It—it's pointed this way."

"So it is," smiled Frank, keeping the muzzle of the weapon directed toward the small man, who was dancing about to get out of range. "But I don't think it will go off unless you make me nervous by getting too near."

"Oh, I won't do that!" assured Mole, retreating still further. Then he turned to Judge Spudd, and squeaked:

"If you want them arrested, arrest them yourself! I don't know nothing about no licenses or permits for ridin' bisuckles."

With that he suddenly wheeled about and bolted through the door of the saloon as if he feared the revolver in Merriwell's hand might be discharged before he could get out of the way.

"Suffering justice!" wheezed Judge Spudd, dramatically. "And it is thus the

majesty of the law is administered and upheld in this town! Say, young man, if you'll buy drinks for the crowd we'll let you off without special permits."

"No, sir," said Frank, firmly, "I shall not buy drinks for the crowd. I never drink myself, and I refuse to be bullied into purchasing drinks for anybody else. If I see fit to stand treat while I am in Silver Bluff I'll do so; but I don't propose to be forced to do anything of the sort."

The judge sighed and looked sad and crestfallen.

"And I am so dry—so dry!" he huskily mumbled. "These are the first tenderfeet we have failed to make set up the bug-juice since I located in Silver Bluff. This is the beginning of the end! Before long this place will be run by tenderfeet, and every saloon will sell soda water. I must be alone with my sorrow."

And he slowly followed Mole into the Golden Eagle.

CHAPTER III.

THE UNSEEN SINGER.

The man from Mexico came down from the steps of the saloon and spoke to Frank.

"I congratulate you on your nerve," he said. "You will find that you need nerve to get along in this country, and you will have further trouble if you remain in Silver Bluff. Do you intend to stop here?"

"Until to-morrow."

"Then you had better put up at the hotel over there and keep away from the Golden Eagle, which is a bad place. How are you armed?"

Frank smiled.

"At present I am armed with this," he answered, holding up the revolver he had captured from the bullwhacker.

"And you have no other weapon?"

"Nothing but my fists."

"Your friends—of course they carry guns?"

"No."

Smith lifted his eyebrows a trifle, the look of gravity on his face deepening, if possible.

"Do you mean to say you are traveling through this part of the country without weapons of any sort save those nature gave you?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is very careless. There is an old saying, which I presume you have heard, that a man out here may never need a gun but once in his life, but when he does need it he will need it bad. You came near needing one bad when that ruffian pulled on you."

"Oh, I don't know. The chances are that if I had owned a gun and tried to draw it he would have shot me full of holes while I was getting it out."

"That is true," nodded Smith. "Really, in that case, as it turned out, you seemed to be better off without a gun. I don't know, possibly you are better off anyway. But remember my warning to keep away from the Golden Eagle and look out for Ben Boze. The others, with the exception of a hunchback who is known as Crooked Pete, are not particularly dangerous. Crooked Pete is a snake, even more dangerous than Boze."

Merriwell thanked the man, and then the boys went to the hotel, where they registered and paid for their accommodations in advance, according to the rules of the house.

Toots set to work repairing his bicycle, the spokes of one wheel being bent.

Frank employed a man to return Ben Boze's revolver, while Bruce lost no time in getting into his room and stretching his massive form on the hard bed, where he was soon sleeping peacefully and snoring loudly.

Shortly after entering the hotel, Frank was surprised to see Sing Lee rushing

toward him, his face beaming with delight.

"Hikal-hi chiakgo chally-ma-lolly!" chattered the Celestial, and then he made a lunge for Merriwell, caught Frank in his arms and gave the boy a frantic hug.

"Here! here! break away!" laughed Frank. "What ails you?"

"Melican bloy velly gleat fightal!" wildly declared Sing Lee. "Kissee Melican bloy footee."

And then before Frank could prevent it, the Chinaman went down on his knees and was kissing Merriwell's shoes.

"Say, say! let up!" cried Frank. "Wait till I get a shine. Those shoes carry samples of dirt from every part of the country between here and Eastern Kansas."

"Melican bloy let Sing Lee havee dilt office shoe," begged the heathen. "Sing Lee keepee dilt to 'membal Melican bloy by."

"It isn't necessary; I'll give you something else to remember me by."

By this time the combined hotel clerk and general utility man had recovered from his surprise, so that he roared:

"Chase yourself, you pig-tailed monkey! I'll give you something to remember me by!"

Then he charged at the Celestial, but Frank intervened, saying:

"I wouldn't hurt him. He doesn't mean any harm."

The clerk looked at Frank in mingled surprise and disgust.

"Well," he said, "you may like it to have that critter huggin' and slobberin' over yer. If yer do, all right."

Sing Lee showed evidences of fear when the clerk started for him, and looked pleased and relieved when Frank interfered.

"Melican bloy velly blave," admiringly declared the Chinaman. "No flaid of Benee Bozee. Benee Bozee blad man. Hitee Sing Lee with whipee. Sing Lee 'flaid of him. Sing Lee glad to slee him gitee hit with him own whipee. Evlybody but Melican bloy 'flaid of Benee Bozee."

Frank found it rather difficult to get rid of the Chinaman, who wanted to follow him about, like a dog, but he finally succeeded.

The supper at the hotel was not at all elaborate, but as Toots declared it was "po'erful fillin'," and as the boys were decidedly hungry, it proved satisfactory.

After supper they sat around and told stories for awhile, and then as it had grown dark Frank proposed that they go out and "do the town."

"Scrate Gott!" cried Harry. "What do you expect to find in this town at this time of day? Do you think of attending the grand opera? or will you go to the circus?"

"We might find something worth seeing," said Frank.

"And we might find something we do not care to see—Ben Boze, for instance," said Jack.

"I do not propose to keep under cover because Ben Boze is in town. It will make all the more trouble for us if he gets the idea that we are trying to avoid him."

"Well, I really don't understand what ails you," grunted Bruce. "You never seem to care to rest—always want to be doing something. Don't you get exercise enough riding your wheel over these mountain trails?"

"Oh, you may sit still and rest," laughed Frank. "I am going for a stroll. Who'll come with me?"

"Oh, I'll have to go along just to keep you out of trouble," grumbled Bruce, getting up and lighting a cigarette. "Drive ahead."

Almost immediately on leaving the hotel and reaching the dark street of the town, the attention of the boys was attracted by the sound of music.

"Listen!" exclaimed Jack. "Where does it come from?"

"From that place," said Frank, pointing toward the door of a saloon, over which was a large illuminated sign of a golden eagle.

"And it was in front of that place that we found trouble when we entered this town," said Harry.

"And that is the place the strange man of the white hair warned us to keep away from," added Jack.

"Fo' goodness sakes, don't go dar, Marser Frank!" cried Toots.

"I am not going there," said Merri-

well; "but we will get a little nearer and listen to the music."

They approached the open door of the saloon, from which came the sad strains of a violin. The performer was playing "Home, Sweet Home," and the sound of the music brought a mist to the eyes of the boys.

"Think," said Frank, his voice a trifle unsteady—"think of hearing that tune in such a town and such a place!"

"Su-su-say!" blubbered Toots, "dat music am gwan teh bre'k me all-a up! It meks meh wish I was back home mah-self."

When the tune was finished there came the sound of hearty applause from within the saloon.

The boys drew nearer to the door. Then to their surprise, after a brief pause, they heard a sweet, childish voice uplifted in song, accompanied by the violin. These are the words of the song to which they listened:

"The sun shines all the long, long day,
But its light is not for me;
The birdies sing their sweetest lay,
But the birds I cannot see;
I live here in the mountains high,
Where the sun sinks down behind;
I never see the sunset die,
For I, kind friends, am blind.

CHORUS.

"Oh, I love the sweet, sweet summer time!
And everybody's good to me,
And gran'pa he is very kind
To the little girl who cannot see.
"My gran'pa says there'll come a day
When his girl shall truly see;
But he hopes that time is far away,
And he clings so hard to me.
I think some day the light I'll find,
For he tells me this is so,
And tells me Jesus cured the blind
On earth long years ago."

The sweet voice stopped, and the song was over. Now no burst of applause came from within the saloon, but there was a suspicious clearing of throats that told the listeners had been deeply affected.

No less affected were the listening boys outside. The childish voice had reached the hearts of every one, and even Bruce Browning brushed his hand across his eyes in a manner that told there was a blur over them.

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER AND CHILD.

"Come," said Frank, "I am going in there."

"Remember the warning of the man with the white hair," came from Harry.

"Hang the man with the white hair! Those men in there can't be very dangerous after listening to that, and I want to see the singer."

"So do I," admitted Jack. "It must be a mere child."

"All right," grunted Browning, who was interested, although he did not care to admit it. "Go ahead, Merriwell, and we'll tag along."

"Mah goodness!" murmured Toots. "I's gwan teh bet a dollar dis means mo' trubblle!"

Frank boldly walked into the saloon, and the others followed him. They entered a room with a bar at one side and small card tables at the other. At the farther end of the room was a faro layout, and that this was patronized by the rough men who worked in the mines was apparent.

Sitting around the tables and on the tables were bearded, toil-stained men, while others were standing near the bar, behind which were two dispensers of liquid refreshments.

Standing in the middle of the floor were the minstrels of the camp, an old gray-bearded man, who had played the violin, and a beautiful golden-haired little girl, six or seven years of age, who had been singing.

The old man was speaking, his voice unsteady with age and weakness.

"Gentlemen," he was saying in a shamefaced, hesitating way, as though he felt humbled by his position, "I reckon the most of you have heard of me and know I don't live far from this camp. I have lived there at the foot of Shadder Mountain for near ten years, working my mine, and troubling nobody. Some time my mine will pay—I know it. It is not paying now, and my money and provisions are all gone. That's what brings me here with my little blind granddaughter. Although she is blind she has been happy with me, and her taste for music is something wonderful. The words

of the song she just sung she put together, assisted a trifle by me. It is her idea and here sentiment. The music is hers entirely. I have not improved upon it at all, and I learned to play it by hearing her hum the air."

"By Jove!" muttered Rattleton. "If he isn't lying, that is something wonderful! The child is a born musician."

"Hush!" cautioned Frank as the old man went on speaking.

"For a year or more since discovering Little Blossom's talent," said the old man, "I have bent all my energies to sinking the shaft of my mine deeper, hoping to strike it rich right away, that I might give her such a musical education as she needs while she is yet young. I have been unsuccessful. Somehow I have lost the lead in the mine, and it is not paying at all now."

"Ther vein never amounted ter shucks," said a man near Frank, speaking to a companion. "Old North has a crazy idee in his head that it must pan out rich, but I reckon it has run out fer good an' all now."

"I haven't the money to open up the mine as it should be," continued the old man, "and so I have decided that I must try to find some other way to get a living and raise money for Little Blossom to have her education. That is why we are here to-night, and any assistance you can render us, gentlemen, will be appreciated."

Then Little Blossom took her hat and started to take up a collection.

At one of the card tables sat a man who had been in Silver Bluff less than two days, yet was well known, his reputation having reached the place in advance of him.

That man was a gambler—a poker sharp. He was known generally by the name of Doubledeal Dan, but it was said that his real name was Powers.

In a certain coarse way he was rather good looking, having dark eyes, hair, mustache and imperial. He dressed in a flashy manner, wearing a fancy double-breasted vest and a gaudy, wide-striped shirt. Across the front of the vest was strung a heavy gold chain, and a large horseshoe pin adorned his necktie. He

wore a ring, in which glittered a huge diamond.

There was something sensual about the face of the gambler. His lips, which were not fully hidden by the dark mustache, were full and red.

With the first appearance of the little blind girl and the old man in the saloon Powers had immediately stopped playing cards, and given them his full attention.

Had any one been watching him closely that person would have seen him draw the wide brim of his hat down so it threw a shadow on his face, his manner seeming to indicate that he wished to conceal his features.

There was a look of satisfaction on the man's face when he heard the little girl sing, and it deepened as he listened to the words of the old man.

Of a sudden he started as if struck by an idea, and his lips muttered:

"There's money in her! She's blind, and she can sing. If the game is worked right, the fools out here in this country will throw their money at her. Well, she belongs to me—and I'll have her!"

The final words were uttered aloud, so the man with whom Powers had been playing distinctly heard them.

It happened that in starting out to take up the collection Little Blossom moved toward Powers. He called to her:

"Come here. I want to give you something first."

She heard his voice and turned her face toward him, smiling sweetly.

"Thank you, sir," she said. "You are so good! Everybody is so good! It seems to me that the world is filled with good people, and I think gran'pa must be wrong when he says some of them are bad."

She came toward him unsuspectingly, and he eagerly scanned her face.

"So you are Little Blossom?" he said, as he reached out and took hold of her hand.

Somehow at his touch it seemed that the child instinctively shrank from him.

"Yes," she answered, and the smile had faded from her face, while there was something like a look of fear in those sightless eyes.

"Well, Little Blossom," said Doubledeal Dan, "I want you."

"You—you want me?" she faltered. "I am sure I don't know what you mean, sir."

"I want you to go with me."
"Where?"

"Oh, far away from here, where you'll never be hungry, and where you'll always have fine clothes and hear pretty music."

"Oh, but I can't go, sir, unless gran'pa goes, too. Is gran'pa going, too?"

"No, I don't propose to be bothered with your old gran'pa," said the gambler, harshly. "He would be in the way."

"Then I can't go, sir, for I'll never leave gran'pa," declared the child, drawing from him. "Please let me go—please do!"

"Wait a minute, I want to tell you something. I have a right to take you away, and I shall do it."

That frightened the child more than ever.

"No, no!" she fluttered. "It would kill me if I had to leave gran'pa! Why should you take me away?"

"Because I am your father."

"My father!"

"Yes. Hasn't your gran'pa ever told you anything about your father?"

"No, never. He told me my mother is dead and an angel in Heaven, but he never would say anything about my father. How can you be my father? You have never taken care of me and lived with me, same as gran'pa."

"It has happened that way, but I am your father just the same, and now I am going to take care of you and live with you. I have lots of money, and you shall have everything you want."

"I don't want anything if I can't have my gran'pa!" sobbed the child, and the card sharp saw she was drawing attention by her apparent fear of him.

"Just like her mother—at first," he muttered. "And how much she looks like her mother! I found a way to win the mother, and I reckon I'll find a way to win the child."

Then it was that the old man, who had been watching them with a look of perplexity on his time-traced face, suddenly started and uttered a quavering cry of astonishment and fear.

"Blossom! Blossom!" he wildly called,

"come away from that man—come here to gran'pa—quick!"

CHAPTER V.

BLUFFING A BLUFFER.

Shaking with excitement and fear the old man started toward the child, who tried to break from Doubledeal Dan.

The gambler held her fast and swung her behind him, as he arose to his feet, facing the old violinist.

"You'll let her alone, if you know what is good for yourself, John North," came harshly from his lips.

The old man halted, and his violin dropped with a clatter upon a table at his side. He swayed as if with weakness, and a look of absolute terror came to his time-scarred face.

"No, no!" he huskily gasped. "You wouldn't take her from me—you can't be as bad as that, man?"

"I always take what belongs to me," declared Powers coldly.

A sudden rage seized on the old miner, and he straightened up, a marvelous fire in his age-dimmed eyes.

"And you take what does not belong to you, you heartless wretch!" he cried. "You are a gambler and a cheat! You rob men, and break the hearts of innocent women!"

"Bah! you are crazy, old man! Everybody knows you are crazy. That is why you have stuck to your worthless mine so long. It is a mercy to the child to take her from you, for you are not able to give her the bare necessities of life."

The crowd in the saloon was greatly excited by this time, and it gathered about the three principal actors in this little scene.

Frank and the other lads were close behind the old man, with whom they sympathized.

"It is a shame!" declared Jack Diamond. "What right has that man to take the child from her grandfather?"

"This thing will invest bearagating—I mean it will bear investigating!" spluttered Harry Rattleton.

Frank said nothing, but there was a look of determination on his handsome face, while he missed not a word that was passing.

The old man seemed to see that the sympathy of the crowd was with him, for he turned to them and made a pitiful appeal:

"Don't let him take her from me!" he begged. "She is all I have to live for in the world—she is my very life! I shall die without her!"

"And that will be a good riddance for the world," sneered the gambler. "You have lived too long already."

"And you should never have been born, you wretch!" cried John North, his mingled anger and distress being pitiful to witness. "You have never brought anything but suffering and sorrow into the world. Give back the child to me! You shall not keep her!"

The card sharp laughed, and the sound of that laugh was like a blow on the old man's heart. John North staggered and clutched at his breast.

"He—he robbed me of her mother!", came huskily from the old miner's lips. "He robbed me of my son! His hands are stained with the blood of both! And now he would rob me of all there is left on earth that is dear to me!"

He staggered, swayed and would have fallen, but Frank Merriwell was at hand, and the boy supported the old man with his strong young arms.

In John North's ear Frank gently and firmly said:

"Be calm. He shall not take her from you."

Those words gave the old man new life and new hope.

"Keep the wretch from doing that, and God will bless you!" he gasped.

"Boys," said Merriwell, "we must take a hand in this."

Powers heard those words, and he laughed derisively.

"Better not, tenderfoot," he warned. "The galoot who chips into my game unasked closes his account with the bank mighty sudden. I have a right to this child, for I am her father."

"Is that true?" Frank asked of the old man.

"Yes, yes!" was the husky confession. "It is true, but he stole her mother from me—lured her away."

"Stole her—bah! She was glad enough to marry me, for I had money to burn.

She didn't have much sense anyhow, and that is why we didn't get along as well as we might."

"She was a girl—scarcely more than a child," declared North. "She was innocent—she knew nothing of the ways of the world. That is why she was foolish enough to run away with you against my wishes. I warned her, for I knew the sort of a man you were; but you had a smooth tongue, and you coaxed her from me. I knew you would abuse her, and I knew she would come back some time. Every night I put a light in the window that she might find her way to my cabin. One night in midwinter one wild, stormy night she came back. She brought Little Blossom with her. She had fled from you in horror when she saw you shoot down Victor, her brother—Victor, my boy. He had found her, and you had not hesitated to stain your hands with his blood."

"In self-defense, my dear sir," said Powers, blandly. "I was never accused of murder."

"Then I accuse you now!" shouted John North. "My poor girl, the mother of Little Blossom, whom she brought to me in her arms, died that night in my cabin. She sleeps at the foot of Shadder Mountain, and Blossom keeps her grave covered with flowers all the year when snow is not on the ground. You killed her, as you killed my boy! And now you would rob me of her child—my little blind darling!"

"Gran'pa! gran'pa!" cried the little girl, struggling to rush to him.

The rough men stirred, then there was an ominous muttering, and scowling faces were turned toward Dan Powers.

The gambler did not miss those looks, and he knew the sentiment of the crowd was against him.

"The fools!" he muttered, and his red lips curled disdainfully under the black mustache.

"If the child were older," he said, "she would prefer to go with me, as did her mother before her, for I have money and you are poor."

Then it was that Frank Merriwell stepped forward and boldly faced Powers, quietly saying:

"Under the circumstances, my dear sir,

you will do well to release the child. You drove her mother to death, it seems, and you have never cared enough for Little Blossom to find out if she were alive or dead. She has become attached to her grandfather, and it is not right for you to take her away."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the card sharp, elevating his eyebrows. "How long since you were chosen to decide in this matter?"

"I have the right that any person has to aid the weak and oppressed against the strong and cruel. I know I am backed up by the sentiment of the crowd present. Am I right, gentlemen?"

Then as if aroused at last, the rough men cried:

"You are right!"

The smile of scorn curled Doubledeal Dan's lips still more.

"And do you think I will be bluffed by a gang of gooloots like this?" he exclaimed. "Why, the whole crowd can't take the child from me! I am its father, and I will keep it. The first one who tries to interfere will eat lead!"

His free hand rested on his hip, and everybody knew he was ready to draw.

Frank Merriwell showed no signs of fear.

"Will you permit the child to say whether she chooses to go with you or her grandfather?" Frank asked.

"Why should I?"

"Because you must!"

The words were not spoken loudly, and yet they were distinctly heard by every person in the room. They did not come from Frank Merriwell's lips, but the speaker was a man who had stepped from a chair to the top of a table, where he stood, a long-barreled revolver in his half uplifted hand. Although that revolver was but partly raised it was pointing directly at Dan Powers.

"The man from Mexico!" exclaimed many voices.

The eyes of the man with the white hair and the gambler met squarely. There was a dead silence, finally broken by the icy voice of Smith, who said:

"It might be better for all concerned, sir, if you were to remove your hand from the proximity of your hip. If you try to get out a gun in doing so I shall shoot you."

There was no sign of bluster about this, but the manner in which it was spoken proved that Smith would do exactly as he said.

Powers was chagrined, but he did not display it. Instead, with all the coolness he could command, he said:

"All right, my friend. I see you have the drop on me, and although I know nothing of the quality of your marksmanship, I do not care to have you shoot at me."

He removed his hand.

"Now," said Smith, "let go of that child, and permit her to stay with you or go to her grandfather as she chooses."

"Very well, sir."

Powers released Little Blossom, and with a cry of joy she ran into the old man's arms.

CHAPTER VI.

SOFTENED HEARTS.

The bluffer had been bluffed, but he accepted the situation with the nonchalance of a veteran gambler. His face seemed to say that one hand did not make a whole game and he had not gone broke on the first pot. There was another time coming, and he had a few cards up his sleeve.

At the first sound of Smith's voice, John North had turned to look at him in a startled, wondering way, but after some seconds the old man shook his head, muttering:

"No, no! I've never seen him before."

The old miner caught Little Blossom in his arms and covered her tear-stained face with kisses, while she clung to him and sobbed.

"There, there, my poor darling!" he said, his hand shaking as it tenderly brushed back her hair, "don't cry any more—don't cry! It hurts your poor old gran'pa when you cry."

"I—I don't wa-want to hur-hurt you, gran'pa," sobbed the little blind girl; "but he fu-frightened me so! Oh, I really and tr-truly thought he was going to tut-take me away from you! That would have killed me, gran'pa—that would have killed me!"

"I didn't think God would be cruel enough to let him take you from me," murmured John North. "Surely God has

let me suffer enough, without finishing my tottering life with such a blow!"

He kissed her again, and a cheer went up from the rough men in the place, as the child's arms were about the old man's neck, and her golden hair mingled with his snowy locks.

"I—thank—you—my friends," said John North, slowly, and with deep emotion. "I thank this young man"—indicating Frank—"who was the first to dare to take the part of a helpless old man. I thank that stranger who stands on the table—I thank every one! And now," he solemnly added, "let us thank God."

Then he knelt there on the floor, in the middle of that saloon, and his old, unsteady voice rose in prayer.

Frank Merriwell and his friends, standing nearest the old man and the little girl, were the first to uncover and bow their heads. Then the others did so, and the hat of every one in that saloon, with the exception of that belonging to Dan Powers, was immediately removed. Some of the men actually knelt.

Powers sat there, a look of disdain on his cruelly handsome face. He had lighted a black cigar, and at that he puffed quite coolly.

But he was not allowed to sit thus.

"Remove your hat!"

The command rang through the room in the midst of the prayer.

Powers looked up and saw that the man from Mexico had spoken, and was again handling his long revolver in a manner that seemed to indicate a desire to shoot.

It occurred to the gambler at once that the man of the white hair was looking for a good excuse to shoot him, now that Little Blossom was not near.

Immediately with a graceful bow and a swinging motion, the card sharp removed his hat, and placed it on the table at his side. His lips smiled, but there was a mad tumult of fury within his heart. He hated the man who had thus humbled him, and he swore that he would find a way to even matters with Smith.

It was a most remarkable scene there in that rough mining camp and that common saloon. A stranger, coming in suddenly and failing to note the bar and

small tables, would have supposed he had struck a prayer meeting.

An eloquent prayer came from the lips of John North. He asked God's blessing on the friends who had stood by him, he asked that Little Blossom might be spared him, and he asked God to soften the heart of the unnatural father.

Then when he had finished Little Blossom prayed, and her sweet, childish voice, her innocent words, everything served to touch the rough listeners and move them as they had not been moved before.

"Dear Lord," she said, "I am so glad you did not let me be taken away from my good old gran'pa! He has always been so good to me! Dear Lord, bless gran'pa, and bless them that kept me from being taken from him. I don't know anything about the man who says he is my father, but I do know about my gran'pa, and I do not want to leave him ever at all. I don't want you to hurt my father, dear Lord, if he is bad, but I wish you would make him good and kind, just like my gran'pa. That is all, dear Lord, but I reckon perhaps you is goin' to hear and 'member what a little blind girl says, who never can see till she goes to Heaven. When she gets there, my gran'pa says she'll see you, dear Lord, who is so good to everybody, and she'll see her own angel mamma, who is up there now. Oh, the little blind girl does want to see her mamma some time! Amen!"

And from the lips of every person in that saloon, with a single exception, came a fervent:

"Amen!"

The old man and the child arose to their feet, and then men crowded round them, crying:

"Hold yer hat, Leetle Blossom, fer we has got somethin' ter give yer!"

She heard them, and smiled such a sweet smile, as she held her hat with both hands.

Then came a rain of gold and silver money into that hat—a rain that astonished and amazed the old man and the girl, for the hat quickly grew heavy to hold.

"Is it all money, gran'pa?" asked Little Blossom, wonderingly.

"It is all money, my dear one!" was

the reply, spoken with deep emotion, "and it is all for you."

"Why, how good they are!" cried the child. "Oh, I thank you all! You are too good—too good!"

"Not by a dern sight!" declared a hoarse voice that had a husky sound. "Arter hearin' that yar pra'r, I'm reddy ter give yer my last ounce o' dust, an' hyar she am!"

It was Ben Boze who spoke, and—wonders of wonders—the man's face and his beard were still wet with tears—his eyes were red with weeping!

Ben Boze, bruiser and ruffian, walked up and flung the last dollar of money he possessed in the world into that hat!

Frank Merriwell gasped for breath, and then he grasped Boze by the arm, saying:

"If that breaks you, come to me when you need money. You can have any reasonable amount that you may want to borrow."

"Whatever is that?" asked the bullwhacker, surprised. "Yer don't mean ter say that ye'd lend me money?"

"Yes. You have a heart in your bosom, and you are a white man, for all that you have seemed something different. I mean it. Come to me when you want money."

"Wa-al, may I be durned!" muttered Boze, as he moved away in a stupefied manner, no less surprised by the offer of the tenderfoot than the tenderfoot had been by his action in giving the little blind girl all the money he possessed.

After a time, Little Blossom put the hat, heavy with money, on a table, saying to her grandfather, with a happy laugh:

"Why, what a lot of it there must be! We are rich now, gran'pa! We'll never be hungry again, and I can learn to play and sing, as you have said I should some day."

"Oh, my friends!" said the old man, gratitude in his face and voice, "you have, indeed, been too good to us! I truly think I see the hand of Providence in all this!"

"Put the money in your pocket," advised Frank. "I would not stop to count it here, if I were you."

He feared that it was possible some

low-minded wretch in the crowd might have his greed aroused by the sight of so much money and the knowledge of its real value.

"I will do so," said John North. "You were the first to stand by me against that man, and I will take your advice. Ah, my young friend! all this is very wonderful to me."

"You must go home at once, and take Little Blossom with you."

"I will do so."

"Have you provisions at your home?"

"No. Everything has been eaten up."

"How far away do you live?"

"A little over a mile."

"Remain here in the saloon till I and my friends obtain provisions for you. We will escort you to your home, and see that you get there all right."

Then Frank and Jack hurried out to purchase provisions for the man and the little blind girl, and they soon returned loaded with all the bags and bundles and packages they could carry.

The provisions were divided among the five boys, so each should carry his share, and they soon were ready to start for the old miner's cabin.

"An' I am goin' right erlong as guard fer all that yar dust," announced Ben Boze. "Ef any galoots tries ter jump us, I'll pump ther p'izen varmints so darn full o' holes that his hide won't hold husks! Thet's whatever!"

Then the little party left the saloon, the big bullwhacker marching along in advance, with a revolver in either hand, John North and his blind granddaughter coming next, walking hand in hand, while the bicycle boys, loaded with the purchased provisions, followed behind.

The men of the camp escorted them to the outskirts, and then gathered in a mass to cheer and cheer and cheer, till the mountain sides flung back their hoarse roaring in a hundred frantic echoes.

CHAPTER VII.

A JOLLY PARTY.

With a "gun" in either hand, his rawhide whip hitched to his belt, the lash trailing behind, Ben Boze, the bully and terror of Silver Bluff, led the way toward John North's cabin.

Behind him walked the old man and

the little blind girl, both happy with childish joy. Little Blossom sang, and her grandfather laughed. Then both paused to listen, and the girl said:

"Hear them cheering now back at the town, gran'pa! Did you ever think the town was full of such good men, gran'pa?"

"No, no!" confessed the old man, "I never dreamed that town could have so many good men in it! Sometimes I have thought it was full of bad men, but I know I was wrong."

A grunt came from the bullwhacker in advance.

"Thar's a heap sight better men back thar now than thar wuz a few hours ago, I reckon," he said.

The bicycle boys, loaded with provisions, were following along behind.

"What do you think about it, Frank?" asked Jack Diamond. "It seems to me that I dreamed all this that has happened before my eyes to-night."

"It is remarkable," declared Frank. "It goes to prove that there may be some good in those who seem lowest and most depraved."

"There's no telling what a man will do in a case like this," puffed Browning. "Look at me! An hour ago you could not have made me believe I would sack a load of stuff like this over such a confounded road through the darkness for anybody or anything."

"Mah gracious!" put in Toots. "Dat am de mos' wonderful fинг ob all, sho's yeh bawn, chilluns!"

"What do you think of Ben Boze's sudden change of heart, Frank?" asked Harry.

"It was one of the most surprising things of the evening."

"But do you think it was genuine?" asked Diamond, cautiously. "Do you think the fellow really is changed?"

"Yes."

"But you can't be sure of it."

"Of course not, but he seemed genuine when he flung all the money he had into the hat of Little Blossom."

"That may have been a trick to fool those who saw it."

"What sort of a trick? Why should he play a trick?"

"He is a ruffian, and he may be plot-

ting to rob the old man and the little girl. If he gave them everything, as he did back in the saloon, he could put up a big bluff that he knew nothing about such a robbery, and suspicion might not fall on him as quickly as otherwise."

"Land ob watermillions!" gasped Toots, in sudden fear. "Dat ma-a-an has got all de shootin' irons dar am in dis whole pahty. What if he should take a noshun into his haid to use dem shooters on us? Lordy! but it meks meh hab de cold perspirations all ober mah body jes' tel fink about dat!"

"And he may be plotting something of the kind," whispered Jack. "Perhaps that is the very reason why he was so ready to come along with us."

"I don't believe it," declared Frank. "I do not want to think it—not even of him."

"The trouble with you," said Jack, a trifle sharply, "is that you always try to make yourself believe everybody is all right. You seem to dislike to think anybody can do wrong and be vicious."

"Well," said Frank, slowly, "isn't that better than it would be if I suspected everybody of being crooked and bad?"

"I don't know."

"I do. I don't think everybody is all right all the time. I know the best fellow in the world is bound to be in the wrong sometimes. I am sure that I make mistakes, myself, and I hope not to be judged too harshly for them. I tell you it seems to me that every one should say in his heart he will not judge others harshly, as he may desire pity some time himself."

"All right, all right," muttered Jack. "You have preached that a long time, and you have practiced it. I think you might have got along better in the past if you had been somewhat more rigid with some of your enemies. I don't suppose anything will change you though. All the same, I shall not be surprised if this man Boze shoots every one of us before we reach the old man's cabin."

Nothing of the kind occurred, however. The cabin was reached at last, with Shadow Mountain towering black and grim above it.

John North went in, Blossom accompanying him, and lighted the one oil

lamp he possessed. Then the others entered, Boze striding in in advance of the boys, having thrust his revolvers into their leather holsters.

"Wa-al, hyar we am!" cried the giant, with an attempt at hearty cheerfulness. "An' we got hyar all right, too. Didn't no galoot dar' tackle us fer that thar boodle. Ef they hed—wa-al, I'd provided a subjec' fer a funeral ter-morrer."

The boys piled the provisions on the rude table, and that table was loaded.

"Now, Toots," said Frank, gayly, "I want you to get into gear, and show what you can do in the way of cooking. Start up a fire in the stove, boys. Let's have a jolly good meal here in short order."

"Wa-al," said Boze, hesitatingly, "I don't judge I'm needed hyar no longer, so I reckon I'd better git out."

"Not by a long distance!" cried Frank. "Just you make yourself as comfortable as you can, Mr. Boze. You are a guest here and you are going to stay to supper. We will have some music and some singing and a jolly time generally."

The face of Ben Boze lighted up with a look that was good to see there.

"Thankee," he said, removing his hat. "It's right good o' you ter invite me ter stay, but don't go fer ter tackle no 'mister' outer the front o' my name. I ain't used ter it, an' it makes me nervous. An', before ther court proceeds any further, I want ter say right hyar that you're all right, ef you be a tenderfoot. I'm takin' a great big shine ter you, an' when Ben Boze takes a shine ter anybody—wa-al, I reckon he's goin' ter stan' by 'em as long as thar's a gasp o' wind left in his old hide."

Then Ben found a corner and sat down on a box.

A fire was quickly built, water was brought from a spring not far away, and Toots, relieved of his coat and sweater, his sleeves rolled up, exposing his black arms above the elbows, began to prepare a meal.

The face of the colored boy shone as he worked, and he whistled gayly such tunes as "Suwanee River," "Old Folks at Home," "Nellie Gray," and so forth.

Old John North was given the most comfortable chair in the cabin, and Little

Blossom hovered near. There was such a look of happiness on the face of the old man that it made Frank's heart swell with a feeling that it was good to be living and there to witness the miner's joy.

Little Blossom was happy. She caressed her grandfather, she sang like a bird, and she laughed like the ripple of falling water.

And what of Bruce Browning? Frank nearly fainted when he found the big fellow stripped of coat and sweater and aiding Toots about the cooking.

"Here! here! here!" shouted Merriwell. "Have you gone daffy, Browning? What are you doing?"

"Be kind enough not to bother me, young man," said Browning, gravely. "You may not be aware that I know not a little of the culinary art, and I have decided to prepare some dainty and toothsome morsels for your pampered appetite. Subside and sit down."

"This is a crazy night, sure enough!" laughed Frank. "Don't you think you'd better let Toots do this work, Bruce? You know too many cooks spoil the broth."

"Now don't let that worry you in the least, my friend. I am simply aiding Toots to hurry things along, as I do not wish him to ruin his complexion over this hot stove."

So Bruce was left to assist the colored boy, which he continued to do, to the unbounded astonishment of Merriwell, Rattleton and Diamond.

Frank talked with Little Blossom, and she told him all about her life and her pleasures. He found she was, indeed, happy, although she was blind.

The door of the cabin was kept open, as the heat of the stove made it rather warm within.

Toots set the table. The supply of dishes was limited, to be sure, but it was decided there would be enough to go round by washing them "between courses."

What a jolly party it was! How they laughed and joked and talked! And what a supreme look of contentment and satisfaction there was on the face of Ben Boze, as he sat back in the corner and watched what was taking place! The big bull-

whacker had not been so happy in many a long day.

Suddenly, without a word of warning, Frank darted out of the open door and disappeared.

A moment later, there was a sound of a struggle and a fall beneath a window of the cabin.

"Something is up—something has happened!" cried Diamond, as he plunged after Frank.

A short time later, before the others could follow, the two boys appeared, dragging a man into the cabin.

That man was Crooked Pete, the deformed ruffian of Silver Bluff.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FEAST.

"I saw him looking in at the window," explained Frank, "and I caught him before he realized he had been detected."

The hunchback gave a snarl and a twist, freeing one of his arms and flinging Frank forward. The boy's foot struck against something, and he dropped on his hands and knees.

In a moment, with the swiftness of a flash of lightning, Crooked Pete snatched out a glittering knife, and lifted it above the back of the fallen boy.

That knife did not descend.

"Stiddy thar!"

It was a hoarse shout, and, quick as had been Crooked Pete's movements, the movements of Ben Boze were even quicker.

The bullwhacker's hand caught the wrist of the hunchback and arrested the knife in midair. Then Boze gave that wrist a twist that caused Pete to utter a whining gasp of pain and drop the knife.

The big man picked up the blade and flung it out through the open doorway, where it disappeared in the darkness.

By this time Frank was on his feet, but he realized that Boze had saved his life.

"Whatever shall I do with ther onery critter?" the bullwhacker asked, speaking to Frank.

"Anything you like," was the reply. "I saw him looking in at the window, and I thought it would be a good plan to know who he was, so I dodged out and

nailed him. I thank you for keeping him from knifing me."

"Don't mention it. I'll fix ther p'izen varmint."

"What'll you do?" sneered Crooked Pete. "Whatever is ther matter with you, anyhow? What kind o' a game be you playin' with these yer tenderfeet? Go in with me, and we'll do ther hull crowd, an' pull off with ther rocks."

"Not any, critter. I hev turned over a new leaf this yer night. No crooked business fer me in ther futur'."

"Bah! I know what ye're tryin' ter work. Ye're gettin' in with ther tenderfeet, an' ye're goin' ter do 'em when they ain't watchin', an' git erway with all ther dust yerself."

"Ye're a derned liar!" roared Boze. "An' I'm goin' ter make yer wish yer hedn't said that, you bet!"

A moment later the whip was in the big man's hand, and he dragged the hunchback out of the cabin. Then those within heard the sound of heavy blows and shrill yells of pain.

"It'll do yer good, ye little skunk!" roared the hoarse voice of Ben Boze. "Take that! and that! and that! Now git! And ef I find yer round yere ag'in, derned ef I don't fill ye full o' lead! That's whatever!"

Frank Merriwell's hand fell on the arm of Jack Diamond, and they stood listening as the sound of the cracking whip and the yelling hunchback receded, telling that the bullwhacker was pursuing Crooked Pete and using the rawhide as he ran.

"Jack."

"Yes, Frank."

"Did I make a mistake in trusting Ben Boze?"

Jack shifted his position uneasily, and then said:

"It doesn't look as if you did, but—"

"But what?" cried Merriwell, in astonishment. "Great Scott! Didn't you see the man save my life?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is enough. If Boze had not been here, Crooked Pete would have succeeded in striking me in the back with that knife, and that would have meant a

funeral, for which I would have provided the corpse."

"That's rust jite—I mean just right," nodded Rattleton. "My heart stood still when I saw the little wretch whip out that knife so swiftly. I didn't have time to reach him and keep him from striking. Boze seemed to be the only one who could save Frank."

It was plain that Jack disliked to say it, but he finally acknowledged:

"This may be a case that will turn out all right, but it is the first one I ever knew, and I never expect to know anything about another one. As it is, the big ruffian may drive the little one off in order to get a better chance to carry out his own scheme."

It was plain that Diamond still had small faith in Boze.

Little Blossom had been greatly alarmed by what was taking place, for she was able to hear the rough words of the two rough men, the blows of the whip and the cries of Crooked Pete.

John North did all he could to calm the fears of the little blind girl, at which Frank took his turn, after a time.

Blossom seemed to be soothed by the sound of Merriwell's voice.

"I know you," she declared. "You are the one who, down in the town, was first to try to make my bad papa give me back to gran'pa. I like you."

She held out her hands to him, and he took them both.

"I like you," she repeated. "Won't you kiss me, same as gran'pa does?"

Frank looked at the old man, who nodded and smiled, and then he kissed the little blind girl.

"Now, say!" cried Harry; "I don't fink that's thair—I mean I don't think that's fair! Where do the rest of us come in?"

"Come in?" asked Blossom, in perplexity.

"Yes, where do we get our kisses? We are all friends of Frank Merriwell, and we were ready to stand by him when he went to your aid down in the saloon."

"Then," laughed the child, holding up her lips, "I want to kiss you all."

Harry took his turn, Jack followed, and Bruce kissed her tenderly, in his awkward way.

"Well, say!" cried Toots; "I reckon yeh'll hab teh 'scuse meh, honey. I ain't gwan teh 'pose on nobody dat cayarn't see mah complexion, no, sar. I's Marser Frank's right bower, yo' bet, but he don' let meh kiss ebry gal dat he kisses—no, sar, nor sar! Yah! yah! yah! Reckum I'd done hab a picnic if he did! Yah! yah! yah!"

The thought of such a picnic threw the colored boy into a paroxysm of laughter.

Blossom shook hands with Toots, who, looking into her sightless eyes, suddenly grew strangely sober. And when the colored boy turned away, he brushed the back of his hand across his eyes, muttering to himself:

"Po' li'l honey bird! Jes' ez purty ez a flower, an' she nebber's gwan teh see out ob dem blue eyes! Mah Lordy! dat am puffec'ly awful!"

By the time the table was set, Ben Boze came slouching back and sauntered in, observing:

"Thar, I don't reckon ye'll see anything more uv that yar varmint ter night, fer it'll take him till mornin' ter patch up his hide. This yar whip has a way uv cuttin' strips right out uv anything it touches, so don't yer worry about Crooked Pete bein' round hyar ag'in very soon."

Frank gave the bullwhacker his hand, and expressed his thanks.

Boze actually flushed.

"Say, tenderfoot!" he cried, "I wish yer wouldn't pile it on so thick! Dern it all! I didn't do anything! Why, ain't you treated me like I wuz a white man, arter all that happened when you struck Silver Bluff! Say, I'm jest tryin' ter keep even with you, that's all."

"Well, you have more than kept even with me, for I am in your debt now, and that for my very life."

"Fergit it. It don't 'mount ter north-in'er, I don't mean that!" the bullwhacker hastily added, seeing he had said something he did not intend to utter. "I mean it's all right. Somehow I'm all twisted an' tangled up."

The little party sat down to the table, and a pleasant meal it was. Old John North asked the "blessing," and the words that fell from his lips were strange-

ly eloquent. Little Blossom said "amen," in her sweet, childish way, and then the feasting began.

Never before had the old cabin at the foot of Shadow Mountain resounded to such hearty bursts of laughter, never before had such a merry party gathered beneath its roof, never before had there been such a meal served on the rude table.

Toots waited on the table with the flourish and skill of an "aristocratic servant." Of course he felt more freedom than he would have felt in serving a New York millionaire, for he ventured to crack a joke now and then, and he laughed when the others joked.

Frank was happy. He told some stories that made Blossom laugh, and brought a smile to the sad face of the old man. He chaffed his friends, and even ventured to "jolly" Ben Boze.

And Boze—he was the wonder of the evening. He actually beamed with pure satisfaction, and he took Merriwell's "jollying" as if it were most agreeable.

"I ain't goin' ter fergit this night ef I live ter be older than ther Rockies," he declared. "I hed begun ter think that wuzn't no fun in anything but loadin' up with razzle-juice an' paintin' ther town, but I've found out that's a big mistake. That yar kind o' fun can't hold a candle ter this, derned ef it kin! I ruther reckon I'm done with that kind o' fun fer good an' all."

Bruce Browning ate and ate, as if he had not been able to get a square meal since leaving the last. He seemed to swell as he ate, till the boys expressed a fear that he would burst if he did not stop, but still he continued to get away with the food before him.

"I won't strike another lay-out like this efore we reach 'Frisco," he declared. "I'm going to lay in a stock of provisions to last a long distance."

"And we'll have to provide another stock of provisions for Mr. North in the morning," laughed Frank.

After the meal was over, while Toots washed the dishes, Ben Boze sat in a corner once more, and smoked a very black pipe, while John North tuned up the violin and prepared to give them some music.

The old man, despite his years, was a wonderful performer on the instrument, and the "Last Rose of Summer" seemed to be his favorite.

Finally Little Blossom sang, and her grandfather accompanied her. The boys asked for the song they had heard in the Golden Eagle, and she gave it. Afterward she sang other songs, and it was evident that she had a marvelous voice.

Finally, the old man gave her the violin, and she astonished the boys by her skill as a player.

"Do you wonder I want her to have a musical education?" asked John North.

"No," answered Frank. "She should have it."

"Music is the delight of her soul," said the old man.

"Yes, yes!" murmured the blind girl, a look of rapture on her face. "It seems to carry me away, away, away! Sometimes it seems to carry me to the very gate of heaven, where my dear angel mother is!"

Ben Boze dropped his pipe, and it broke on the floor. His head was bowed, and he was shading his eyes from the light, as if it hurt them. He did not seem to mind that his pipe was broken.

After a little time, Blossom asked the boys if they could not sing. Frank was urged to sing first, and he did so. He had a beautiful baritone voice, and could yodel wonderfully. He sang two yodling songs, which filled Blossom with inexpressible delight. She clapped her hands, crying:

"Sing them again! sing them again!"

So he was obliged to sing them again, after which all the boys sang, Toots "bearing down heavy" with his bass voice. They sang the college songs so often heard at Old Yale, "Stars of the Summer Night," "Nellie Was a Lady," "Solomon Levi," "Old Man Moses," "Uralio," and so forth.

While they sang Little Blossom fell asleep in her grandfather's arms, a smile of perfect happiness and contentment on her flower-like face.

Then, silently they arose and filed out into the night, leaving the white-haired old man alone with the treasure he valued more than all things else in the world—more than his very life.

CHAPTER IX.

POWERS STRIKES.

Directly after breakfast the following morning, Frank mounted his wheel and rode away toward the cabin of old John North.

It was a beautiful morning in the mountains, with the sun just rising over the eastern peaks, and Frank felt light and buoyant. He whistled as he pedaled along.

Abruptly coming in sight of the cabin at the foot of Shadow Mountain, he was astonished to see three persons near the door, one of whom was the gambler Powers.

"That wretch is there to make trouble for the old man and the child!" exclaimed Frank. "I must see what I can do about it."

Swiftly he drove his bicycle forward. Still watching, he saw John North try to take Little Blossom into the cabin, saw Doubledeal Dan strike the old miner a terrible blow that felled North to the ground, saw Powers catch up the child, and heard the blind girl scream with terror.

Then Frank drove his spinning wheel straight at the gambler, crying:

"Drop that child, you ruffian!"

Powers turned in astonishment, clasping Little Blossom with his right arm, and holding her, despite her wild struggles. He saw Frank Merriwell, and stepped aside in time to avoid the boy.

With a spring Frank was off the wheel. He did not hesitate to make a rush for the man.

Uttering a snarl, Powers tore out a revolver and fired.

Frank had seen the movement and realized his peril. Down he ducked, just as the revolver spoke, and the bullet cut within an inch of his head.

Then Frank rushed in under the arm of the man and grappled with him.

Powers was forced to drop Little Blossom and give his entire attention to his nervy and determined assailant.

As it was, although he was a heavy and powerful man, the gambler barely kept himself from being hurled to the ground.

Quickly he reversed his revolver, feeling that he must end the struggle at once,

or the youth would tire him out and get the best of him.

Grasping the revolver by the barrel, Powers brought the butt of the weapon down on Merriwell's head with stunning force.

Frank dropped to the ground, where he lay motionless.

Then it was that Little Blossom saved Frank's life. She was running screaming down the trail toward the town, and Powers did not feel like stopping to shoot the fallen boy, although he longed to do so.

"I must catch her before she arouses the town," he said, as he ran after the little girl.

Later, when Frank recovered, he sat up and saw old John North wandering aimlessly around the cabin, muttering to himself.

"Great Christmas!" cried Frank, gingerly touching his head. "That fellow did give me a thump! Mercy! how my cranium aches!"

He was not a little dazed himself, but he remembered what had taken place and he wondered where Blossom and Powers could be.

Getting upon his feet, the lad hastened to question John North.

The old man paid no attention to him as he approached, but continued to mutter and stare around on the ground.

"Here!" cried the boy, catching him by the arm, "where is Little Blossom?"

"Don't bother me!" weakly whined the old miner. "I'm busy—I'm hunting for it!"

"Hunting for what?"

"The lost lead to my mine, of course. Where is it? I'm sure I didn't put it in my pocket."

"Put it in your pocket?" gasped Frank, aghast. "How could you put such a thing in your pocket?"

"Oh, I don't know! You bother me, and my head is throbbing so! Go 'way. I must have hidden it somewhere, and I will find it."

"Man, man!" shouted Frank, clinging to him; "where is Little Blossom? Has he carried her away?"

"Yes, he carried her away," nodded John North. "He said he would marry her, and he would give her money and

fine clothes. She left her poor old daddy and went away with him; but she came back one night—one terrible night. How the wind howled! She came back to die!—I wonder where it is," he muttered, feebly feeling in his pockets. "I must find it again. I don't know why I want to find it, for she is dead, but still I feel that I must."

Frank started back, horror written on his face.

"The man is mad!" he whispered.

North gave him no further attention, but continued to wander about, gazing at the ground and muttering incoherently.

"His brain is turned at last!" came sadly from the boy. "This last blow has completed the overthrow of his reason."

Then Frank quickly decided to ride back to Silver Bluff and tell the whole town what had happened.

Powers must be pursued, and Little Blossom should be taken from him. No time should be lost in this.

Frank's wheel lay on the ground, where it had fallen. He ran to it, picked it up, vaulted into the saddle.

Back to Silver Bluff flew the boy.

Ben Boze was the first person he met on entering the town, and he stopped long enough to tell the big bullwhacker what had happened.

"The ornery varmint!" shouted Boze. "I'llhev a gang arter him in less than two shakes o' a muel's hind hoof! He shan't tote ther little gal off—not by er long shot!"

Then Frank hastened on to the hotel, where he found the boys, who were wondering where he had gone.

When he had told them what had taken place, they were greatly excited.

"We'll have to follow the ruffian and take her from him!" wildly declared Browning. "I don't know how I am going to do it, for I've scarcely been able to crawl since that meal I ate last night, but I am ready to do everything I can."

"Get your wheels, boys!" cried Frank. "We will ride to the cabin without delay. Boze is getting up a party of citizens to take the trail, and we must be with them."

"Or ahead of them," nodded Diamond.

"Say," cried Harry, "if the men of this town overtake Powers, we'll have a

good chance to witness a winching—I mean witness a lynching."

"And that will be the sort of justice Powers deserves," came coldly from Jack.

"Mah gracious!" gurgled Toots. "Dis coon nebberr see no such places fo' ruimpuses as ar am out in dis country—no, sar!"

In a very short time the boys were mounted on their bicycles and following Frank Merriwell toward the cabin of John North.

CHAPTER X.

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW AGAIN.

Powers soon overtook Little Blossom, for the blind girl stumbled and fell upon her face in the trail.

As the man caught her up, she uttered a loud scream of despair and terror.

"Shut up!" he brutally commanded. "What's the use to raise such a row! I am going to take you where you will hear all the pretty music you like, and have good things to eat and wear. That's all your kind ever cared for anyway."

"I want to go back to my gran'pa!" cried the child.

"Well, you won't go back to him any more. Shut up your howling!"

When the child continued to scream, he tried to frighten her into silence, but did not succeed, so he roughly covered her mouth with his broad hand, which he held there till she lay limp and white and passive in his arms.

"Now perhaps you will keep still!" he growled.

Swiftly he climbed over some rocks and made his way from the path to the vicinity of the regular trail that ran down into Silver Bluff.

Near the trail a horse was hitched. The horse was saddled and bridled, and it did not take Powers long to unhitch the animal and get into the saddle, aided by a boulder.

With the limp and apparently lifeless child in his arms, he rode out upon the trail. The blind eyes were closed, and the wind toyed softly with the yellow curls.

"Good-by Silver Bluff!" cried Double-

deal Dan. "They'll never see me down there again. My only regret is that I can't meet the man from Mexico once more. I'd like to settle the score with him."

Then he turned the head of the horse from the town, and rode swiftly away.

Behind a bowlder close beside the trail, not more than three miles from Silver Bluff, a man was sitting. He had snow-white hair and a pale, stern face.

"I know I am ahead of him, and I am sure he will not attempt to go back through the town," muttered the man. "He must come this way. One or both of us will remain here after we meet."

He peered out from behind the bowlder, his keen eyes gazing far along the winding trail.

A horseman came into view.

"He is coming!" said the man behind the bowlder, his voice hard and cold. I have not waited for him in vain."

Then he saw the form of a child in the arms of the horseman, and his face grew harder and colder.

"It is as I thought," muttered the man. "I knew he meant to try to carry her away."

The horseman came on at a gallop till it was near the bowlder.

Suddenly the white-haired man rose to his feet and leveled a revolver straight at the heart of the man on the horse.

"Hold on, Dan Powers!" he commanded.

The horseman saw him and recognized him. Then, in a moment, the child was swung round to shield the rider, who reached for a "gun."

Like a flash, the man behind the bowlder changed his aim and fired.

With a bullet in its brain, the horse fell, and the white-haired man rushed out in time to catch the child in his arms.

Powers had been flung to the ground and stunned. When he recovered, he found the man from Mexico standing over him, still with a revolver in his hand, while the child lay on the ground beside the trail.

"We have met again," said Smith, coldly.

Powers shivered, despite his wonderful nerve.

"Yes, we have met again," he said, hoarsely. "Who are you? I believe there is something familiar about you."

"Look—look well at my face, Dan Powers! Don't you remember me?"

"No."

"Then look again."

With a sweep of his hand, the strange man removed his hat and the wig of false hair he had worn. A change seemed to come over his face, and Powers gasped:

"Heavens! It can't be! You—you are not—not Victor North, her brother?"

"I am Victor North, son of John North, and brother of the poor girl you killed."

"But—but I shot you!"

"And fled, like the coward I know you to be at heart. Look, here is the scar where your bullet struck."

He showed a scar above the temple in the edge of the hair.

"It did not kill me, but it deprived me of memory for a time," Victor North declared. "When I recovered, I did not know my own name, and I could not tell who had shot me. I got well, and wandered about over the world, trying to find out something about myself. In Mexico I made a fortune, and in Mexico, one day, the memory of the past came back to me like a flash. Then I came here to find my father, and I found you. I should have finished you last night in the saloon, but did not wish to do it before my poor old father. I waited for this time."

"Then I suppose you mean to murder me in cold blood?" hoarsely whispered Powers, his face blue with fear.

"It is what you deserve," declared Victor North, "but you shall have a chance. I tell you now that I am a dead shot, and I shall kill you when I fire, but I am going to give you a chance at me, for we'll fight a fair duel. Get up and get ready. Life will be ended for one or both of us within five minutes."

A band of horsemen galloped along the trail in pursuit of Powers. They were the citizens of Silver Bluff, and Ben Boze was leading them.

The bicycle boys were in advance, and the party was covering ground in a reckless manner.

Suddenly Boze cried:

"Thar he is!"

A horseman was coming toward them, carrying a child in his arms.

But that horseman was not Powers.

"It is Smith, the man from Mexico!" exclaimed Frank Merriwell, in astonishment.

"He has Little Blossom."

"Wa-al, may I be derned!" gasped Boze.

They gathered round Smith, asking him a hundred excited questions. Finally, one cried:

"Where is Powers?"

"You will find him along the trail about half a mile," said Smith, calmly. "You may plant him there, or take him into town and have a funeral, just as you like. I met him when he was carrying off this child, and we settled it with our guns."

Then it was that the rough men expressed their admiration and satisfaction, giving a great cheer that roused Little Blossom, and caused her to murmur:

"Hear them cheering now, gran'pa! How good they are to us!"

Back to the cabin at the foot of Shadow Mountain they carried the little blind girl. On the way they were met by men on foot, armed to the teeth, who had come out to help in the hunt for Powers. Sing Lee, the Chinaman, was one of these, and he chattered his delight when he saw Frank Merriwell and the little girl. He seemed to think Frank could do anything and had saved Little Blossom.

"Melican bloy vely smalt!" he cried. "Noblody lun away flom Melican bloy allee samee vely klick. Sing Lee know him do all light to klech blad inlan. Chikal-chi hollygo lally!"

"Mah goodness!" exclaimed Toots. "If I couldn't talk United States bettah dan dat, I'd keep mah mouf shet sho'!"

On the way to the cabin, the man from Mexico explained to the astonished citi-

zens of Silver Bluff that he was the son of John North and the uncle of Little Blossom. He said he had plenty of money, and the child should have everything she needed, while the old man should be tenderly cared for as long as he lived.

It was a wonderful revelation, for the man brought proof, so there was no reason to doubt his words.

As they approached the cabin, it was seen that the door was standing wide open. Then they made another discovery.

In a window at the front of the cabin burned a lamp.

The men became silent as they drew yet nearer and saw the light of the lamp in the window. Some of them had heard how for nearly two years after his daughter ran away with the gambler old John had placed a light in the window every night.

And now, once more, although it was broad day, the light was in the window.

The old man's son, still bearing Little Blossom, was first to enter the cabin. Frank and the boys followed him.

They saw the old sad-faced, white-haired man lying at full length on the bed, beside which Little Blossom was kneeling.

"He is sleeping," said some one.

Victor North turned from the bed and faced those who had accompanied him there.

"Yes, he is sleeping," he solemnly said; "but he will awaken never again in this world. He has placed the light in the window for the last time, and gone to his last long rest."

[THE END.]

The next number (62) of the TOP WEEKLY will contain as the complete story, "Frank Merriwell Among the Mormons; or, The Lost Tribe of Israel," by the author of "Frank Merriwell."

TIP TOP WEEKLY

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A NEW CONTEST Will Shortly Be Announced. Watch this Column for Details.

The success of previous TIP TOP WEEKLY contests has been such that the publishers are assured of the readers' interest in them. Novel contests with valuable prizes will therefore remain a feature in the American boys' favorite weekly.

Cunks With Tip Top Readers.

The judges are still at work reading the flood of replies received in the "Summer Sport" contest, and it will be several weeks before the result can be announced. The popularity of this contest is phenomenal and it shows that the readers of Tip Top Weekly appreciate the efforts of the publishers to provide interesting competitions for them. The selection of such a subject as "Summer Sports," appeals to all. The views received were various, but at last accounts baseball was in the lead. The result of the contest will be given as speedily as possible.

While on the subject of contests it will be well to state that the details of a new and novel competition is now in progress of arrangement. If you have been a Tip Top reader in the past you have learned that Tip Top Weekly contests are noted for possessing three cardinal points—novelty, simplicity and value of prizes. In those three words can be read the reason for the great success of Tip Top Weekly competitions.

It is an old opinion that boys, as a rule, do not care to write letters. There is something in the bother of preparing pen, ink and paper, and securing stamps that deter the majority of boys from writing. If such is the case, and you will confess there is some truth in it, the vast number of letters received daily in praise of the "Frank Merriwell" series is a grand and lasting tribute to the talented author. Speaking from the standpoint of many years in editorial harness, we must say that

never in the history of juvenile literature have stories been so welcomed and praised as those written by Mr. Burt L. Standish for the Tip Top Weekly. The Weekly is still in its infancy, but if the number of friends it has made is any criterion it is destined to live to a ripe old age. In the language of one of our youthful readers: "I just hope the Frank Merriwell stories will go on and on until the end of the world, even if I ain't on earth to see it."

Answers to Correspondents.

C. G. M. (Cleveland, Ohio).—1. If you wish to become a good singer or effective reader you must learn how to use the voice. You must possess in the first place a clear and resonant voice. It need not be strong, but it should be sympathetic, and fall with a sweet sound upon the ears of your listeners. Flexibility is the essential thing to be cultured. By its means that most common and fatal defect, monotony, is avoided. 2. Your parents have both legal and proper authority to forbid your joining any society or organization, even though you are eighteen or nineteen years of age, and may be able to support yourself. They are your advisers, and are legally responsible for your actions until you are 21 years of age. 3. At your age it is not advisable to call on a young lady with the idea of marriage. You are too young entirely. Wait until you are in a position to support yourself comfortably, and then, if you are of age, and feel like taking the important step in life, you are at perfect liberty to do so. You should always heed your parents' advice, no matter how old you may be.

R. L. G., Philadelphia, Pa.; Walter Rodgers, Chicago, Ill.; W. G. S., Pittsburgh, Pa.; E. J. L., Little Rock, Ark., and many others—Bart Hodge and Frank Merriwell's friends at Fardale will soon reappear in the "Frank Merriwell" stories.

"Jack Diamond," Baltimore, Md.—1. Your letter has been forwarded to Mr. Standish. 2. In high jumping, the front muscles of the thigh are principally used. They are attached at one end to the top part of the thigh bone, at the other to the knee cap, which passes over the knee and is fixed to the top part of the shin bone. In the act of jumping, these muscles contract violently, and straighten the leg with a jerk, the quickness of which mainly contributes to the height of the jump. 3. The table to which you refer is too long for this column. See a work on athletics.

J. H. C., Cape May, N. J.—1. Five feet five inches is above the average height for a boy of sixteen years of age, but it does not necessarily follow that because you are growing fast that you should be delicate. It is probably imagination. Some people get an idea that for some reason they are not strong, and it is a difficult matter to convince them otherwise. Consult your family physician, and he will prescribe a course of diet and exercise that will bring you around all right. 2. We will send you a book entitled "Complete Training Guide for Amateur and Professional Athletes" on receipt of price, ten cents. It tells how to preserve and improve the health and strength.

F. P. K., Easton, Pa.—The recipe you ask for is not public property. The manufacturer holds it as a proprietary article, the same as a patent medicine.

M. S. C., Washington, D. C.—Meerschaum pipes and holders are colored by constant smoking. Care is necessary in handling, as meerschaum is susceptible to scratches.

J. C. J., Bay City, Mich.—To keep small alligators in the North the temperature of the water in the tank should be about seventy degrees. Feed them on bread crumbs and sugar cane.

Steady Reader, New York.—1. No book can teach you to become an author. It is an art that must come naturally. There is a certain mechanical part, however, such as punctuation, make up, climaxes, etc., which you can learn if you have any talent for writing a story. 2. In Boston, Mass., there is a literary bureau which edits manuscripts of all kinds, and aids writers in finding a market for their productions.

The Emerald Ring.

"When I was a cabin boy on board the ship *Caledonia* in the old days," said a sailor not long ago during a stormy passage on an ocean steamer, "I was such a little chap that they called me Mouse. On one trip there was a gentleman aboard, a first-class passenger, who had a young

daughter; and this girl wore an emerald ring on her left hand, and two others on the right. Every morning I brought her meal and water to dip her hands in, and she said it kept 'em white. She used to laugh at my rough hands.

"One day, after I had been round and attended to all the rooms, the captain called me and said, 'Mouse, go at once and give the young lady that ring that you took.'

"What ring, captain?"

"Don't you act as if you was innocent, you young rascal. This morning you saw the young lady take off her rings as usual, to dip her hands in the water you brought, and when she wasn't looking you took the emerald."

"I never did, captain!"

"Take care! No one but you has been in the room, Mouse, and she has been to me and complained of the theft."

"Captain, I swear I am innocent! I haven't taken anything from anybody!"

"You won't confess it, then?"

"It wasn't me! It wasn't me!" I cried, bursting into tears.

"Very well," said the captain, loudly; "go and fetch the carpenter."

I knew what that meant. The carpenter was the biggest man we had on board, almost as tall as the mizzen mast, he seemed to me, and he used to wield the 'cat' when any one was whipped. He had a grudge against me, and I knew the pain would be awful.

"But I brought the carpenter, just the same. He and the captain talked a while in the captain's room, and when the carpenter came out I could tell by the smile on his face that he had a job on hand.

"That afternoon the cook told me that I was to be made an example of, and given thirty strokes with the 'cat,' on the deck, before the whole ship's company, early the next morning, for stealing the young lady's ring.

"That night was an awful night for me. If I could have felt sure that I should have been drowned at once instead of being snapped up by the sharks, I should have jumped overboard. Every minute I hoped and prayed that that ring would turn up, and save me from my terrible flogging, but it was in vain.

"Next morning, as I lay trembling, the big carpenter came and dragged me out on the deck. I was half dead with fear, but I could see all the passengers and the crew gathered together in silence. It was dreadful. And there was the young lady who owned the ring looking cold and pitiless.

"I was stripped to the waist, and the carpenter tied me up to the mast, and made ready with the 'cat.' Then the captain stepped up and said: 'Mouse, once more I ask you to confess that you took the ring.'

"Captain," I replied, "if you was to cut me to pieces, I couldn't confess that and tell the truth."

"Listen, boy," he went on, his voice trembling a little, "if you've thrown it into the sea, or lost it, I'll pay for it, I'll replace it; but you've got to tell me—do you hear?"

"I burst into tears, and told him again and again that I knew nothing about the ring. Then he turned to the people and said, 'This boy must be a little thief and an obstinate liar, too. Whip him, carpenter.'

"The carpenter struck me once, and again, and a third time; but after that I never counted, for I fainted dead away before he had gone to the tenth stroke.

"When I came to myself, where do you think I was? Why, I was in that young lady's room, lying on her own bed, and she was taking care of me; and on her finger I saw that very ring—the emerald!

"I couldn't make it out, but presently I learned how it all was. The cook, who was tender-hearted and couldn't bear to see me whipped, had been killing a

fowl just as they went about it. He opened it, and there in the bird he found the emerald ring.

"How did it come there? Why, the girl had knocked her ring, in washing her hands, into a plate of fruit parings that was there. The fruit parings had gone down the spout to the fowls, and one of them fowls swallowed it—a chicken'll swallow anything; and that very fowl was the one that the cook had killed.

"Well, he rushed on deck, as you can believe, and there, before the whole company, he showed them the proof of my innocence, and convinced them that poor Mouse, who lay there senseless, was neither a thief nor a liar.

"Well, well," said the sailor, "and here's what I've got to show for it." He opened his collar, and showed, tied around his neck with a ribbon, a beautiful diamond ring set with emeralds.

"I don't wear that—it wouldn't look quite right on my hands." He smiled as he showed his hands, horny and rough with the handling of the ropes. "But I don't part with it, neither. After they went ashore, that girl and her father, they came back to me with that ring, and I've kept it by me ever since, and always shall."

The Australian blacks are as fond of throwing the boomerang, to see who is the best man, as some Englishmen, with more or less brains, are of shying at the plebian cocoanut. Each man

Throwing the Boomerang. in boomerang contests appears with his favorite weapon. A line of spears is laid on the ground as a boundary. The thrower steps back from it a few paces, grasping his boomerang at one end with his right hand.

He advances, raises his arm, with the elbow bent, above his head, and the convex edge of the weapon downwards.

With a rapid, circular movement of the arm from left to right, he sends the boomerang on its course, with the concave edge in the direction of the line of flight at the moment of delivery. The weapon flies swiftly until it reaches its culminating point, seventy or eighty yards away, and twenty yards above the earth, where it flutters and hangs for an instant in the air. Then it spins back to the thrower, and falls within a few yards of him. The palm is given to the thrower whose boomerang returns and falls the nearest to him.

In this manner the boomerang is thrown when its object is a flying bird, so that if it misses its mark it shall return to the thrower. The weapon is thrown differently when used for fighting purposes.

Then the thrower runs rapidly forward, and delivering it at the level of his hip, makes it strike the ground on one of its horns ten or twelve yards from him. The weapon then ricochets, flies straight away for sixty yards, keeping a horizontal line three or four feet from the ground, and gradually rises until it is spent and falls to the earth.

The interesting author from whose book we have condensed this description of the boomerang contest, also describes the nerve of a stalwart warrior who offered himself as a target to the boomerang throwers. Grasping a shield of light wood, two feet long, a foot wide, and four inches thick, he placed himself thirty paces from the boundary line of spears, and challenged any one to hit him.

His assailants, standing the other side of the line, threw at him in rapid succession, but one at a time. He, watching them with a keen eye, avoided a hit, now by a slight movement of his body, and again by catching the boomerang on his shield. He was not hit once. His nerve was marvelous, for a blow from a boomerang either kills or wounds severely.

SURE TO GET WELL.

Mamma—"Run for the doctor. Little Dick is very sick."

Papa—"Don't worry. He'll be all right to-morrow."

"Why, how do you know?"

"It's snowing, and he hasn't had a chance to try his new sled since Christmas."

Sports and Pastimes.

Putting the Shot.



RULES.

The shot shall be a metal sphere weighing sixteen pounds. It shall be put from the shoulder with one hand, and during the attempt it shall not pass behind nor below the shoulder. It shall be put from a circle seven feet in diameter, two feet of whose circumference shall be a toe-board four inches in height. Foul puts, which shall not be measured, but which shall count as puts, are as follows:

1. Letting go of the shot in an attempt.
2. Touching the ground outside the circle with any portion of the body while the shot is in hand.
3. Touching the ground forward of the front half of the circle with any portion of the body before the put is measured.

Each competitor shall be allowed three puts, and the best three men in the first trial shall be allowed three more puts. Each competitor shall be credited with the best of all his puts. The measurement of the put shall be from the nearest edge of the first mark made by the shot to the point of the circumference of the circle nearest such mark.

RECORDS IN SHOT PUTTING.

12-lb. shot—America—55 ft. 2 in., G. R. Gray, Travers Island, N. Y., June 11, 1892.

14-lb. shot—America—51 ft. 5½ in., G. R. Gray, Travers Island, N. Y., June 12, 1892.

16-lb. shot—New Zealand—39 ft. 4 in., D. McCormack, —, Ireland—46 ft. 5½ in., Denis Horgan, Ballsbridge, August 15, 1894. America—47 ft., G. R. Gray, Chicago, Ill., September 16, 1893.

18-lb. shot—America—41 ft. 9½ in., G. R. Gray, Travers Island, N. Y., June 7, 1890.

20-lb. shot—America—38 ft. 7¾ in., G. R. Gray, New York city, January 23, 1892.

21-lb. shot—America—39 ft. 1½ in., G. R. Gray, St. Catherine's, Ont., August 10, 1891.

22-lb. shot—England—35 ft. 10 ½ in., D. J. McKinnon, London, June 22, 1884.

24-lb. shot—America—33 ft. 11¾ in., G. R. Gray, Boston, Mass., April 12, 1890.

25½-lb. shot, with follow—America—36 ft. 8½ in., W. Real, Philadelphia, Pa., October 25, 1888.

28-lb. shot—Ireland—34 ft., G. R. Gray, Dunsborough, July 8, 1885.

28-lb. shot, with follow—Ireland—35 ft. 1 in., W. Real, Limerick, August 27, 1889.

42-lb. shot—Ireland—27 ft. 4 in., J. C. Daly, Limerick, June 13, 1888.

42-lb. shot, with follow—Ireland—28 ft. 3½ in., W. Real, Limerick, June 18, 1884.

56-lb. shot—Ireland—19 ft. 3¾ in., W. J. M. Barry, Mallow, May 14, 1885.

56-lb. shot, with follow—America—22 ft. 11¾ in., W. Real, New York city, October 20, 1888.

56-lb. weight, with follow—Ireland—23 ft. 9¾ in., W. Real, Limerick, August 6, 1888.

MUSCLES EXERCISED.

In putting the shot, the muscles called particularly into action are the front part of the deltoid, which is attached to the top part of the arm, and at the other end to the collar bone, and brings the arm upward and forward; the top part of the pectoral muscle, which also runs from the top of the arm to the collar bone, and brings the arm forward; the triceps, which are fixed at one end of the shoulder and shoulder blade, and at the other end of the fore-arm, below the elbow, and extend the arm at the elbow joint. The put is also assisted by a simultaneous spring with the legs and a rapid move of the body.

CLOCK MADE OF BICYCLES.

What is probably the oddest clock ever manufactured has been made by a Frenchman. It should appeal to every wheelman, for it is constructed solely of bicycles and parts thereof. It stands eleven and a half feet high, and is the queerest combination in appearance at which any cyclist ever gazed. Withal, it keeps correct time, and the man whose duty it is to keep it in order has a very easy time of it, for so delicately is it constructed that the gain or loss is almost infinitesimal. It bears the appearance at first glance of a circlet of bicycle wheels intertwined, in the centre being an immense rim, while within this rim are the figures that denote time and the hands that point the hour and the minute. All rests on the pedestal beautifully panelled, which adds to the picturesqueness.

The circlet of wheels is formed of thirteen of these useful articles, all of which are possessed of pneumatic tires. They are not wholly ornamental, for they form a part of the clock frame.

The top of the clock is formed of twelve handle bars. Underneath this is the escape wheel, the axis of which is actuated by the uppermost wheel at the left of the combination of handle bars. The escape wheel is composed of a transmission or sprocket wheel, the chain points of which form the wheel teeth.

Two pedal rods form the arms of what are called the pallets. Hanging just above the base, and in the centre, is an ordinary bicycle wheel, which acts as the pendulum. The pendulum rod is composed of portions of bicycle frames, which are made of steel pipe. Crank rods are used to form the figures from one to twelve upon the dial, the circlet of which is a huge pneumatic tire. The minute strokes of the clock are short nickel plated spokes, the nuts of which are screwed on.

The hands of the clock consist of steel piping, which forms part of the frame of the bicycle, sprocket wheels and crank rods. The sprocket wheel is at the reverse end of both the minute and hour hands.

The bell upon which the chimes are sounded is an enlarged bicycle bell, beautiful in tone, with a clear, musical note that charms. The clock strikes both the quarter and the full hours, but the striking train is not visible to ordinary observation. The entire mechanism of the clock runs as smoothly as the most placid river. In so far as regularity of time is concerned, the variation is less than a sixteenth of a second a month, the only necessity to correct time keeping being that all the parts shall be constantly and carefully oiled.

The name of the inventor and the maker is Alphonse Duhamel. He has kept in the background, and evinces no desire to become famous. He is a Parisian clock-maker. The clock will be placed in one of the public buildings of Paris.

Applause.

(Letters from TIP TOP WEEKLY readers are always acceptable. Views and suggestions will be welcomed.)

Sanbornville, N. H., April 29, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I will write and tell you what I think of the Tip Top and the Red, White and Blue libraries. I think they can't be beat. I like the Tip Top better than any library I ever read. But like some others of this place would like to hear from Frank's old friend Barney.

Yours,

W. Henry Willey.

Troy, N. Y., April 30, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I congratulate you on the success of the Tip Top Library, and hope that it will grow to a greater extent each week.

G. P. Bert.

South Norwalk, Conn., April 30, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I am an interested reader of your paper and like it very well. Often I wish it was published twice a week. I have read all the stories from No. 1 up, and I often read the back numbers over again. I wish that they will never stop being published.

Charlie E. Lockwood.

Marietta, Ohio, May 1, 1897.

Dear Sirs: We are newsboys and have formed a society which we call the Newsboys Reading Club. We take the Tip Top, Red, White and Blue, and many other publications, and we like them all very much.

Yours truly,

Charles Jackson, Pres.
Reddy Moore,
Albert Sniffen,
Chuck McGerin.

Seattle, Wash., May 2, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I thought I would write and tell you how we like the Frank Merriwell stories. We all think they are fine. We wish them every success.

Harry Hess,
Lee Ledgewood,
Chas Stoltzing,
Nelly Pickerell.

Newburyport, Mass., May 6, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I want to let you know what I think of the Tip Top Weekly. It is the best book I have ever read. And I have read a good many other libraries. I hope the Tip Top Weekly a success forever. I remain your reader,

C. E. Goodwin, Jr.

Pittsburg, Pa., April 10, 1897.

Dear Sirs: We have been reading the "Tip Top Library" for a long time and think they are the best published. I think the ones at Fardale were the best. We wish Bart Hodge would appear again. Wishing the Tip Top Library a success, we remain, your readers,

Frank H. Ebert,
Elmer C. Kafer,
Albert Bradley.

Chicago, Ill., April 6, 1897.

Dear Sirs: I have been reading the Tip Top Library from 1 to 58 and I like it very much; I can't wait until Monday comes to get it. I wish you would publish it twice a week instead of once. Pauline Des Landes.

Elkhart, Ind., April 14, 1897.

Gentlemen: My companion and myself have been readers of the Frank Merriwell stories from 1 to No. 51 and we think they are the best stories we ever read. Frank Merriwell's at Yale College are the best. We would like to know if Bart Hodge and Barney Mulloy will turn up again.

Sherman Golden,
Burt Wear.

Savannah, Ga., April 20, 1897.

Dear Sirs: We have read your libraries, both Tip Top and Red, White and Blue, and are glad to say they are the best stories we have read in a long time. We have read them from the very first. Hoping that they will continue, we are, respectfully yours,

Robt. M. Tilton,
C. Marion Lerburrow.

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